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EARLY GREEK PHILOSOPHY

By

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FOREWORD

References to authorities, except of the most general kind, are precluded by the plan of the Series to which this Primer belongs. It is, therefore, as well for me to mention that I have gone to the original sources for my materials. The admirable work of Hermann Diels, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Bd. i., Berlin, 1906, has been most helpful for the præ-Sophistic philosophers. As regards the interpretation of early Greek philosophy I have found no reason to depart from the views given in my *Philosophy of Greece* (1898). At the same time I wish it to be understood that, in my opinion, the very scanty information at our disposal permits no more than a conjectural interpretation of what the Greek philosophers from Thales to Socrates really taught. And it is only fit that the beginner should be told as much on his first introduction to the subject. The great thing is that he should become interested enough in these uncertainties to think that the time spent on them has not been thrown away.

A. W. B.

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EARLY GREEK PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER I

THE SCHOOL OF MILETUS

1. The Meaning of Philosophy.—It is related of an old Greek sage that on being asked to explain what was meant by philosophy he replied: Life is like a public festival. Some go there to buy and sell, others go to compete in the games, but a third class go simply to look on, and these are the best of all. Well, just in the same way most men are born slaves to the pursuit of gain or glory, whereas the philosopher freely devotes himself to the study of truth.

This idea of philosophy as disinterested speculation has been handed down from the Greeks to ourselves, and has even been widely popularised, as common language seems to prove. Any one who shows a great curiosity about things in general, apart from their utility to himself, any student who, like the young Francis Bacon, takes

all knowledge for his province, is apt to be called a philosopher; while conversely, he who has gained the reputation of being a philosopher is expected to know everything—not merely everything that is known already but everything that ever will be known, and some things that perhaps cannot be known at all.

Even popular language, however, is dimly conscious of a distinction between the philosopher and the scholar. Broadly speaking, the one is expected to know all about nature, the other is expected to know all about history and literature. Even his warmest admirers would hardly have called Mr. Gladstone a philosopher; while it might have excited some surprise if any recorded deed or word of any human being from the creation down to the most modern times had escaped his notice. On the other hand it seemed quite in character that the typical philosopher, Herbert Spencer, should be rather proud of not knowing the date of something that happened three centuries ago; and that he should congratulate himself on not having received a classical education.

Among the Greeks also philosophy was associated in a peculiar manner with the study of nature as distinguished from the study of history

and literature, which are more the subjects of what we call scholarship and erudition. And this fact explains how the word philosophy itself came into being. Originally all men who were particularly distinguished for the extent of their knowledge—poets among others—went by the name of *σοφοί*, the nearest English equivalent to which is wise, although wisdom with us seems more limited to knowing what is useful for the conduct of life than what a Greek meant by Sophia. Now, in a relatively simple state of society, to know all that can be known about literature, history, and human interests generally seems a not impossible or inordinate ambition. It is otherwise with nature. True, the Greeks as compared with ourselves had hardly an idea of the vastness and complexity of the physical universe; still, such acute and sincere observers could not fail to perceive, when they set their minds to it, how infinitely greater is the world of nature than the world of man. And so it came about that those who took nature rather than man for their province disclaimed the title of wise or knowing men, modestly preferring to be called *lovers of knowledge* or, as we now say, students, which is precisely what is meant by philosophers.

We are told that the first to adopt the name was the celebrated Pythagoras, who is also credited with the definition of philosophy as disinterested speculation, quoted at the beginning of this book. But it seems likely that both the word and the definition belong to a somewhat later age than that in which Pythagoras lived.

2. **Greek Religion.**—Before philosophy arose, Greek curiosity about the origin and structure of the material universe was satisfied by an elaborate system of mythology. It is still a matter of dispute how religion first began, but it seems to be generally agreed that all the progressive races have passed through a stage in which their gods are conceived as personified natural objects or natural forces. At any rate, that was how the Greeks represented to themselves the beings whom they worshipped. Working, as we may suppose, on a mass of loose and discordant traditions, their poets elaborated the figments of popular religion into a literary scheme of such unfading interest that an acquaintance with Greek mythology has remained part of a liberal education all over the modern Christian world.

It was a unique circumstance in the history of religion that the Greek poets should play such a

decisive part in the evolution of theological belief. That the poets were able to exercise this commanding influence over public opinion arose from the absence among the Greeks of a priestly caste or corporation like those which dominated the great Oriental civilisations. Priests as a class abounded, but they were neither united nor powerful. Each particular sanctuary had its priest, claiming special knowledge of the god to whom it belonged, ready to explain how the favour of that particular divinity could be won or his anger appeased, able perhaps also to tell the legend of the sanctuary, the particular circumstances in which the god came to settle at that place. And even in very ancient times Greek armies on a campaign were attended by soothsayers whom the generals consulted in reference to any great calamity or any striking apparition presumed to be of supernatural origin. But these officials, although habitually treated with great respect, had no more than a personal authority; neither priests nor soothsayers belonged to an order possessing the enormous wealth and political influence of the Babylonian or Egyptian hierocracies, or of the Catholic Church in mediæval Europe. Assuming intellectual curiosity and intellectual progress to be good things, it was

fortunate for the Greek mind that traditional beliefs had no stronger support than the ordinary conservatism of human nature, that they were not bound up with the material interests of a body accustomed to identify the truth of their opinions about the gods with the preservation of their corporate property.

Greek Mythology in a systematised form was, as I have said, a creation of the poets, and more particularly of Homer and Hesiod. With Hesiod the conception of the gods as nature-powers is quite evident; Homer presents them more as personal beings; but with him also evidence of their purely physical origin and nature is never far to seek. Zeus constantly appears as the cloud-collector, that is, the upper heaven; Athené bears the ægis or cloud-shield of her father Zeus; Apollo, his son, the far-darter, is distinguished by the unmistakable attributes of a solar deity. And there seems to be a latent consciousness, at least in what are supposed to be the more recent portions of the *Iliad*, not only that the Olympian gods are nature-powers but also that they have no existence except as indwelling spirits of nature. Their detachment from material objects, the conception of them as self-conscious personal beings, is of course most complete when they are brought

together in conclave for purposes of deliberation or festivity. Now it is just on those occasions that Homer takes his gods and goddesses least seriously, presenting them even in a ludicrous light, with a certain sceptical irony.

Nature is not moral; and the gods of Greek poetry are neither exhibited as themselves models of good conduct, nor as necessarily encouraging good conduct among mortals. In fact they behave as men and women might be expected to behave if they lived for ever and were clothed with irresistible power. Their life among themselves is that of a dissolute aristocracy; their treatment of the human race is determined by the frankest favouritism. An organised priesthood would not have tolerated such undignified proceedings in the objects of its worship as Homer reports.

At the same time, in default of a priesthood—better even in some ways than a priesthood—public opinion among the Greeks did something to moralise religion. The gods were supposed to govern human affairs; and rulers, whether real or imaginary, cannot but become associated to some extent with ideas of justice. They became more particularly associated with the keeping of promises, which is the very foundation of social

order, by the Greek custom of invoking them as witnesses to oaths. For to break an oath which a god had witnessed was, as the Decalogue puts it, taking his name in vain—conduct which he naturally resented. Moreover Zeus, the supreme god, 'father of gods and men,' was regarded as being in a particular way the patron of destitute persons and of strangers. At the same time it must not be supposed that morality ever became so completely identified with religion in Greece as in ancient Israel or among Christian nations. And to the fact of their distinction is due the constitution of an independent moral philosophy by the early Greek thinkers—perhaps also the constitution of an independent physical philosophy as well.

3. **The Seven Sages.**—In an early stage of civilisation people are saved the trouble of thinking about moral philosophy or abstract principles of right conduct by learning the laws and customs of their land or tribe, just as mythology saves them the trouble of finding scientific explanations of natural processes. But where a number of petty states exist side by side, each with laws of its own, where repeated changes of government involve the necessity of making new

laws, above all where the individual members of the community have so far emancipated themselves from the yoke of custom as to exercise a certain discretion in the management of their private affairs, there a sort of moral rationalism will arise, an idea that certain things should be done because they are good in themselves, not because they are prescribed by authority.

These conditions were fulfilled to a remarkable extent in the Hellenic world during the first half of the sixth century B.C. The old patriarchal monarchies, such as we find still existing in Homer's time, had given place to aristocratic republics; and in many instances one of the aristocrats had succeeded for a time in making himself what the Greeks called a tyrant, or absolute ruler, by playing off the people against the nobles. Men who formerly occupied a leading position in their own city were driven into exile and spent their enforced leisure in visiting foreign parts and studying the varieties of human life there offered to their observation. A vast extension of commerce brought the Greek mind into vivifying contact with the great Oriental civilisations and with the uncivilised inhabitants of Northern Europe. Moreover, the economical revolution brought with it unexpected changes

of fortune and new valuations of personal worth. It came to be a popular saying that 'money makes the man'—long descent counting for little or nothing when the hereditary magnate had lost his paternal estates.

It was in these circumstances that a group of worthies became widely celebrated under the name of the Seven Sages of Greece. Each sage got the credit of having originated some pithy saying which thenceforward became a current coin in the treasure of popular wisdom. What strikes us most about these adages is their brevity and the abstract wording that distinguishes them from the proverbs of other nations. Some of them had the glory of being inscribed on the walls of the temple at Delphi; and two in particular are pregnant with a wisdom that the highest Greek ethical teaching did but expand and apply. These are, 'Be moderate,' and 'Know thyself.' To realise and practise the duties they recommend was to possess in its fulness what was *par excellence* the Greek virtue of Sophrosyné. We ordinarily render the word by Temperance; but temperance even in the wide sense of avoiding excess in every direction fails to convey its full meaning; for he to whom nature or training has given Sophrosyné adds the faculty of self-know-

ledge to the faculty of self-control. He is what artists call the master of his means; he has learned what he can do, and does it; something tells him how far he can go; up to that point he goes, but not a step beyond.

Opposed to Sophrosyné as the ideal Greek virtue was what one may call the ideal Greek vice, in the sense of what wise Greeks most abhorred, that is, Hybris. Literally hybris means no more than excess, and some trace of this significance survives in our own word hybrid, used primarily of animals that are a cross between two species, thus as it were exceeding the limits assigned to them by nature. Morally and etymologically hybris is also connected with the word outrage, which literally means no more than 'going beyond'—that is, beyond what reason and law prescribe, but which in the evolution of language has come to mean going beyond the bounds of ordinary licence and crime. The Greeks as a dignified and self-respecting people were peculiarly sensitive to all such transgressions, from insolent and overbearing language to acts of unprovoked and gross personal violence committed in the mere wantonness of irresistible power. Nature, as they conceived her, is bound by strict laws of limitation; and therefore the gods, being

nature-powers, showed themselves particularly hostile to hybris; and the poetic interpretations of mythology all went to show that the old kingly races had perished by drawing down divine vengeance on their parricidal crimes or on their incestuous loves. In historic times the same feeling was particularly directed against the outrageous abuses of power committed by tyrants on the one side and by unbridled democracies on the other. As a mean between these two extremes, aristocracy found most favour with thinking men; while if a democracy had become firmly established, they looked to the middle class as the best guardian of social order against the turbulence of the nobles or of the people.

4. **The Reign of Law.**—I have said that the Greeks conceived nature as bound by a law of limitation. This conception is so closely connected with their habits of political self-government, with the fact that their cities were constituted as free republics, each jealously guarding its independence against all the others, that we cannot tell which came first, the political organisation or the creed. At any rate, that their republican habits led to the philosophical idea of

nature as a self-sufficing orderly universe, developed on impersonal lines, undisturbed by the arbitrary volitions of supernatural beings, seems likely. An Oriental, brought up on traditions of personal government, could not easily grasp that idea, could not but conceive the material world as subject like himself to the will of an irresponsible master. And even the few self-governing Semitic communities remained subject in religion to priesthoods that preserved the tradition of a celestial autocracy intact. The Greeks, as we saw, had no such priesthood, and therefore their high intelligence was left free to work out a truly scientific philosophy of nature.

In positive science, on the other hand, Greece was much behind the great Oriental theocracies. These had long promoted the study of arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy, although more as adjuncts to magic and religion than from pure speculative curiosity. Such curiosity was, as we have seen, the characteristic note of philosophy; and it is a signal merit of the early Greek thinkers that they should have known how to carry away what was really valuable in Eastern learning while discarding nearly the whole of the superstition in which it was embedded.

5. **Thales.**—Among the seven sages of Greece, Solon of Athens has remained through all ages the most celebrated for practical genius; and many who would be puzzled to tell when or where he lived have heard of him as an ideally wise man. To those, however, who are not studying the history of politics but the history of thought, the most interesting of the whole band is not Solon but Thales of Miletus, the founder of Greek and indeed of all European philosophy. It is no accident that this wonderful man should have been a Milesian. At the time when he flourished, that is to say, early in the sixth century B.C., Miletus was the most prosperous of the Ionian cities in Asia Minor, and the Ionians stood intellectually at the head of the whole Hellenic race, the furthest removed from primitive barbarism, the least exposed to contagion from the contemporary barbarism that surrounded Hellas like a sea on every side. We know that religious scepticism began at a comparatively early date among the Ionian Greeks, for those parts of the Homeric poems where the gods are exhibited in a rather ridiculous light, although among the latest additions to the original epic, are still very ancient, and these are evidently the work of an Ionian hand. It only remained to substitute a

serious scientific explanation of the world for the discredited Olympian mythology, and this was first attempted in the school of Miletus.

Thales was not a writer of books, and what we know about him comes from reports of which the earliest cannot be dated nearer than half a century after his death, while the most important information of all comes from Aristotle, who lived not much less than two and a half centuries later than his time. But it all seems credible enough; and on putting these scattered notices together we reach the conception of Thales as a true master of those who know, combining great practical sagacity with a firm grasp of scientific realities, so far as they were then accessible, and an instinctive feeling out after that universality which alone can lift positive science to the supreme heights of synthetic philosophy. He is credited with having discovered certain elementary propositions of geometry: that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal, and that if two straight lines intersect the opposite angles are equal. Any one can see by looking at the figures that the fact is so; perhaps Thales first proved that it *must* be so. And he is also stated on good authority to have predicted an eclipse of the sun which the calculations

of modern astronomy show to have occurred in the year 585 B.C. Apparently Thales owed his place among the Seven Sages to that lucky forecast. I say lucky, because at that time astronomers knew no more than that eclipses recur at certain intervals; they were unable to tell whether a particular eclipse would be visible on a certain part of the earth's surface or not. Thales, no doubt, ascertained by studying the tables drawn up by Babylonian astrologers that a solar eclipse would be visible somewhere or other that year. By good fortune not only was it visible in Asia Minor but it also fell on the day of a great battle between the Lydians and the Medes, so alarming the combatants that they separated and made peace.

So much for Thales as a man of science. As a philosopher, he taught that water is the principle of all things, or what we should call the fundamental element. It was a Semitic idea, quite familiar to us from the earlier chapters of Genesis, that the earth is surrounded by water on all sides, being protected against an inflooding of the great deep below by its own solid structure, and against irruptions from above by the solid vault of heaven —a notion whence our word 'firmament' is derived. In like manner modern science con-

ceives the earth and all the heavenly bodies as surrounded by a vast sea of ether, the medium by whose pulsations light, heat, electricity, and perhaps even gravitation are constituted and transmitted. Now the idea has been gaining ground for some years past that matter is made out of ether, was originally evolved from ethereal particles or pulses, and is perhaps destined to resolve itself into them again. And it would seem that Thales came to the same conclusion about the derivation of all things from water by a more summary process than modern science would approve of, but in a spirit closely akin to that of our own most advanced physical investigators, the generalising, assimilating spirit so characteristic of philosophy in every age.

Another recorded saying of the Milesian pioneer points in the same direction: 'All things are full of gods.' Here, at first sight, we seem to have the old mythology back again, to be no further advanced than Hesiod was when he represented the great cosmic powers as personal beings, marrying, begetting children, and quarrelling with one another. If, however, we take the words in connection with the general drift of his teaching, they acquire another meaning. Had the citizens of a Greek republic been addressed

as so many kings they would none the less have represented a realm of law and order as against the personal despotisms of the East; and so, when Thales said that there was a god in amber or a god in the loadstone, he really meant that the drifting cloud and the falling thunderbolt belonged to the same world of natural occurrences as the phenomena, then first beginning to be scientifically observed, of magnetism and electricity.

6. **Anaximander.**—I have said that Thales probably learned what astronomy he knew from Babylon, and that his view of the relation between earth and water was Semitic. Now it is certain that the philosopher was not of pure Greek race; and one rather doubtful pedigree even makes him belong to a Phœnician, that is to say, a Semitic family. There seem to be very insufficient grounds for the belief; but were it true, philosophy would remain a product of European not of Asiatic culture, while the fertilising stimulus that first started Greek thought seems to have come not from any Semitic source but from Egypt. At any rate the beginnings of speculation at Miletus coincide with the permanent establishment of a Milesian colony at

Naucratis in the Delta, a concession due to the liberality of the very enlightened Pharaoh, Amasis.

With Anaximander, the pupil of Thales, and like him a Milesian (born 610 B.C.), we already stand on more solid ground. This marvellous thinker may be called the second founder of philosophy, for he first gave it literary expression in a book of which some fragments still survive. According to him the primary substance whence all things arise is not water, nor, indeed, any form of matter known to us, but an infinite something without limit in space or time. Out of this all the worlds are evolved by a necessary process of succession, and into it they return when their fated term of existence is completed. Only so, as Anaximander thinks, can the eternal laws of justice be fulfilled. No single combination of material conditions among the boundless possibilities of existence has a right to continue for ever, blocking the way that others also are waiting to traverse in their turn. Here we have the cardinal Greek virtue of Sophrosyné, the Ionian rule of self-limitation, raised to the dignity of a universal law, determining the life and death of things in themselves.

There is no room in Anaximander's system for

the immortal gods of Homer; each world in the infinite succession of worlds is a god indeed, but a god destined to perish like ourselves.

Like Thales, Anaximander has a place in the history of science no less than in the history of philosophy—perhaps even a greater place. We are told that he made the first map; and that he conceived the earth as hanging unsupported in space, although he did not conceive it as a globe but as a cylinder. This, however, marks a considerable advance on his master's view of the earth as a flat disk floating on the water. According to him the heavenly bodies are vast revolving hoops of fire pierced with circular apertures which give us the notion of them as luminous disks. And he anticipated the nebular hypothesis so far as to teach that these hoops were evolved out of the formless Infinite by a process of gradual differentiation.

Evolution was an idea familiar to all the early Greek philosophers. It presents, indeed, no difficulties to men at a much more primitive stage of thought than theirs. We ourselves have grown up gradually from very small beginnings, and the natural thing is to conceive the world as having been developed in the same fashion. Moreover, primitive folk are accustomed to look

on the transformation of men into animals or plants, and of animals or plants into men, as quite an ordinary occurrence. It is not, therefore, surprising to find Anaximander saying that land animals were originally developed from aquatic or fishlike animals, and that 'man was born from animals of a different species.' The remarkable thing is the reason he gives for his theory. 'While other animals quickly find food for themselves, man alone requires a prolonged period of suckling. Hence had he been originally such as he is now, he could never have survived.'

7. Anaximenes.—We shall see presently what causes brought the genuinely scientific movement of the Milesian school to an end. Before expiring it produced one more great representative in Anaximenes, the successor of Anaximander. With less speculative daring, he seems to show a closer observation of fact. For him also there is a primal substance of infinite extent, in which and from which all finite things have their being. That elementary substance is Air, the air that we breathe, our very life. To use his own words, 'that which is our soul and constitutive principle, also holds the universe together.' A philosopher

who so expressed himself now, or indeed at any time after Plato, would be properly called a materialist. But we can hardly apply the name to Anaximenes. Materialism and spiritualism are a correlated couple. Each term first becomes intelligible as the antithesis and contradiction of the other.

We have better grounds for crediting Anaximenes with what would now be called a mechanical theory of nature, as distinguished from what, by another modernism, may be described as the 'specific energies' or 'occult qualities' of his predecessor. Anaximander taught that such antithetical pairs as wet and dry, hot and cold, etc., were separated out or 'differentiated' from the homogeneous Infinite where they had previously existed in a latent state. To Anaximenes, on the other hand, heat and cold, like the solid, liquid, and gaseous states of matter, were all merely so many products of rarefaction and condensation. Air squeezed together became cloudy vapour, under additional pressure vapour turned to rain, and rain by the same process to vegetable and animal substances, which ultimately pass into air again. Observing with perfect accuracy that heat and cold are somehow connected with dilatation and compression, this early precursor

of Bacon unfortunately reversed the real relation by supposing that air is chilled by being condensed and warmed by being expanded. And that is why, says Anaximenes, we press our lips together when we want to blow cold, and open them when we want to blow hot. In studying the errors of such a man we must remember that to ask questions and answer them wrongly helps progress incomparably more than not to ask them at all.

Good care is taken, says a German proverb, that the trees shall not grow into the sky. Milesian philosophy, with its splendid promise of positive knowledge, perished after the third generation, first choked by rank undergrowths of superstition, then uprooted by earthquake and storm. But the same causes that put an end to speculation in one part of Hellas favoured its rise and propagation from new centres of intelligence elsewhere. It was just this multiplication of intellectual centres, leading to the cross-fertilisation of mental growths, that gave the Greek genius such an extraordinary productivity, a productivity of which the world's history affords no second example.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST METAPHYSICIANS

1. **The Religious Revival.**—In all times and countries the philosophy of a nation has been intimately related to its religious beliefs. And if this is true of modern European thought which has Greek thought to build on as an independent foundation, much more is it true of the original Greek thought which started without any such inheritance from the past. Now it is a remarkable fact that Greek philosophy as it goes on evolving seems to come into closer and closer connection with popular religious belief, with the current pagan theology. Among ourselves, as is well known, rather the reverse process obtains. Since the Middle Ages speculation has tended on the whole to break away from dogmatic trammels. Fully to set out the causes of what seems to us so singular an inversion of the natural order would require a volume; and indeed the problem is one

that classical scholarship has not yet completely elucidated; but a few summary indications will be found helpful for the intelligence of what is to follow.

The Greeks had not one religion but two religions; or rather they had many religions, the objects of which grouped themselves under two general headings, according as their home was in the heavens or under the earth. We speak of the one class as Olympian, of the other class as Chthonian deities. The Olympian gods —typified above all by the great triad, Zeus, Apollo, and Athené,—are associated in a peculiar way with the bright upper sky and the sun; apart from their human interests they enjoy unchanging and immortal felicity. The Chthonian gods are associated in the first instance with the dead, and their shadowy chief, Pluto, exists only as a personification of the grave; but they are also conceived in a more concrete way as powers of vegetation and growth, of what is sent up from the underworld to the earth's surface, whether plants or springing waters; and these find their most characteristic representatives in Demeter (literally Mother Earth), her daughter Persephoné, and Dionysus, originally a god of all subterranean springs, but tending to become specialised as a wine-god.

From their great prominence in Greek classic literature, the Olympian gods have come to figure in our imagination as the proper objects of Greek worship and the centres of Greek religious belief. It seems likely that the religion of the higher classes, whose thoughts and feelings classic literature above all expresses, was in fact Olympian, turning itself by preference to the bright and immortal aspects of nature. On the other hand it was to be expected that the vast labouring population, whose interests lay especially in agriculture, should turn by preference to the Chthonian gods, to the givers of corn, and wine, and oil. These too were more human, more sympathetic than the Olympians in that they shared man's mortality and grief. Every year Demeter, the Earth goddess, mourns for her daughter Persephoné, the flower-crowned spring, carried off by the King of Death to share his subterranean throne. Every year Dionysus, the vine-god, gives his body to be torn to pieces and mangled by the vintage and the wine-press. Nor did the process of assimilation end here. From the idea of a dying god came forth the idea of an undying life for man. Persephoné returns to her mother every spring in a resurrection of leaves and flowers. And by a still

more significant symbolism Dionysus, the twice-born, first from the fruitful vine, then from the wine vat, celebrates a joyful immortality in that life-giving draught which gladdens the hearts of gods and men. Thus for mortal men also the grave came to be thought of as the gateway to another existence—though not necessarily to an existence of everlasting joy. For as it is the very law of life that death should be dreaded, if we cease to fear death as the end of all our happiness here we must learn to fear it as opening the possibility of endless unhappiness hereafter.

It is an economic law that morality should be more prized and more practised among the lower than among the higher classes of society. For justice is the appeal of the poor against the tyranny of the rich, and temperance is the guardian of the poor against the vicious self-indulgence and extravagance which are so much more speedily fatal to them than to the rich. Hence we find a distinctly more moral tone in Hesiod, who addressed himself to the hard-working rural population, than in Homer, who addressed himself to the idle and warlike aristocracy. Thus when a belief in human immortality came to be developed out of the Chthonian religion it was utilised by the superior moral

feeling of the industrial classes as an additional sanction for the laws of right and wrong. A state of future rewards and punishments is unknown to the authors of the *Iliad*, but we find a scheme of retributive justice after death set out in what critics suppose to be a late addition to the *Odyssey*.

It is a common experience to find the belief in another world utilised by a particular class to further their own interests by working on the superstitious imagination of the vulgar; and such seems to have been also the case in Greece. An elaborate system of ritualistic observances took the place of righteous conduct as a passport to the dwellings of the blest; and bloody sacrifices came into high repute as a means for expiating real or imaginary guilt. Such phenomena as Revivalism and Salvationism were not without their counterpart in old Hellas; only there the first stimulus to these tumultuous manifestations of religious feeling seems to have been imported from among the barbarous Thracians or from the rot-heaps of decaying Semitic civilisation.

Two general causes, subsequently reinforced by a third, operated in the sixth century B.C. to set on foot a great religious movement, beginning with the lower strata of Greek society and spread-

ing upward till it absorbed the highest. A great wave of Asiatic conquest, started long before, but only becoming formidable to the West when it came under the energetic direction of Persia, brought with it a general sense of insecurity and terror most favourable to religious excitement. Simultaneously with this the growth of democracy in the Greek city-states gave a new prominence to the popular faiths whose nature has just been analysed, imposing them even on the higher classes and endangering the old aristocratic ideal of Sophrosyné, that is, self-limitation and self-control.

The Ionians had always been a colonising race, and under the stress of Persian conquest their migratory tendency received an additional impulse. New settlements were founded in Southern Italy, and some of these became the homes of philosophic schools marked by extraordinary originality of thought, but somewhat lacking in the sanity and balance so characteristic of Ionian speculation in its first beginnings, steadied as these were by the traditions of an immemorial civilisation.

2. **The Pythagorean School.** — Considerable uncertainty prevails with regard to the chrono-

logy of the Italian Schools, and our authorities hold conflicting views about their origin and mutual relations. Pythagoras, whom for convenience we may take first, is an especially problematic figure. There is good contemporary evidence for the fact of his existence; but in what we are told about him the historical element (if any) is not easily distinguishable from the mythical. To be made the subject of marvellous legends—or inventions—is usually the fate of prophets or religious teachers rather than of philosophers; and in fact there is good reason to believe that Pythagoras belonged to both orders, to the lovers of simple knowledge—for whom, as will be remembered, he is said to have invented that incomparable name philosopher—and to those others who also claim truth for their heritage, but with a higher warrant than mere reason can give, to the class whom we generally call mystics.

According to the best of our information the life of Pythagoras extended through the greater part of the sixth century B.C., and ended with its close. Thus he came under the double influence of the scientific movement started by Thales, and of the great religious movement known as Orphicism. Orpheus was a mythical personage

who stood godfather to a vast, spurious literature, the scriptures of a new Salvationist method, the worship of a dying god, and the hope of a blessed hereafter. Pythagoras associated this belief in immortality with the old Oriental doctrine of metempsychosis. He or his disciples taught that the eternal soul passed through a series of reincarnations, rising or falling in the scale of existence according as each earthly life had or had not been spent in accordance with the law of purity. As a help towards leading the perfect life Pythagoras founded a religious order to which women were admitted equally with men. At what period the sage began his social experiments is not known. Perhaps an attempt to set up the order in his native island of Samos may have excited the wrath of Polycrates, its brilliant and successful tyrant. At any rate, Pythagoras fled from Samos and settled in Croton, an Achæan colony on the Gulf of Tarentum. There, under his direction, the order flourished for many years until, like some more modern churches, it tried to obtain political supremacy in alliance with the aristocratic faction. A popular tumult, in which according to some accounts Pythagoras himself perished, put an end to the reforming movement as an organised community. But as a ferment of

thought the school lived on, exercising an unparalleled influence on the whole later course of Greek philosophy, down to the final extinction of paganism under the Roman Empire.

3. **Pythagorean Science and Philosophy.**— 'Much learning does not give intelligence, or Pythagoras would have possessed it.' So, with his usual scornfulness, wrote a somewhat later sage, the celebrated Heracleitus. And as a general principle the sarcasm is not without truth, as many a modern instance teaches. But it was not true of Pythagoras. If tradition may be trusted he had not only mastered all the knowledge of his age but had enriched it with important discoveries. He is said to have demonstrated the most fruitful proposition of elementary geometry, the theorem that the square on the base of a right-angled triangle equals the sum of the squares on the two containing sides. And he is also credited with the discovery that the height of notes on the musical scale is determined by the proportionate lengths of the chords by whose vibration they are produced, so that a vibrating string of half the length produces a note an octave higher. How much of the astronomy peculiar to his

school goes back to its first founder we cannot tell. But he seems to have started that daring course of speculation which resulted between two and three centuries after his time in the theory, revived by Copernicus from Greek science, that the earth revolves on her own axis and is carried with the planets round the sun as the central orb of the system to which we belong.

No European teacher has ever been so completely identified with his school as Pythagoras; and if this fact precludes any accurate distinction between the original contributions of the master to science and the subsequent additions made by his disciples, it makes the task of determining what was individual to him in philosophy almost impossible. In after ages the central Pythagorean doctrine undoubtedly was that all things are made out of number. Not, be it observed, that numbers or, more generally, mathematical relations constitute the very soul of nature, but that number is, like the Water of Thales or the Air of Anaximenes, the very stuff of which the world is made. But this seems too abstract a theory, not to say too subtle and elaborate, for so primitive a philosopher as Pythagoras himself to have constructed, even in outline; nor do we find any reference to it among his immediate successors.

What we do find them referring to as a current notion is the system of opposites, the idea that the universe is built up out of antithetical couples: the Limit and the Unlimited; the One and the Many; Rest and Motion; Light and Darkness; Good and Evil. To conceive things in general, and more particularly human affairs, under the form of balanced opposition was a fixed mental habit with the Greeks: our very word antithesis, taken straight from their language, still perpetuates that form of thought among ourselves; although no modern—not even Macaulay—has pushed its use to such excess. By its help Homer and Herodotus arrange their materials; by its laws the great sculptors disposed the reliefs on the pediments of the temples they had to adorn with groups of statuary; as a rhetorical artifice it disfigures the noble eloquence of Thucydides. In philosophy we find the employment of antithetical couples first exemplified by Anaximander, who, as will be remembered, assumes an eternal Infinite out of which the finite and perishable things of experience are formed, developing such contrasted qualities as heat and cold, dryness and wetness, by a process of differentiation from its homogeneous substance. We may suppose that the individual service of Pythagoras was to

take up and generalise this fundamental idea, bringing the great social conflict of good and evil into line with the universal processes by which order is evolved out of chaos.

4. **Heracleitus.**—So far the philosophers with whom we have had to deal have been little more than names, distinguished from one another by purely intellectual attributes, not recognisable as living personalities. But Greece was the very land of strongly-marked, vivid, individual characteristics, as the Homeric poems already show, and the personal note, so conspicuous for two centuries in her lyric poets, could not fail ultimately to make itself felt in the creations of abstract thought. It meets us for the first time in Heracleitus of Ephesus, universally acknowledged as the greatest of the præ-Socratic philosophers, and probably destined to rank for original genius among the greatest that the world has ever seen. We may add that with him the separation of philosophy from science in the strict sense begins. His interest lies solely with the one universal law of nature, possibly generalised from particulars, but not dependent on them, rather dictating to them what they shall be. Science and common sense have always protested

against such an assumption: our own Francis Bacon has given the weightiest and most splendid expression to their protest; but others were found to utter it long before him. We have to ask, however, whether science itself could have dispensed with those paradoxes of pure thought, whether Bacon himself did not miss more truth by a servile adhesion to supposed facts than the Greeks missed by a sovereign disregard for them.

Our personal knowledge of Heracleitus comes almost entirely from what fragments of his composition survive; for no reliance can be placed on the stories current about his life, beyond the bare statement, confirmed by some references of his own, that he flourished at the end of the sixth century B.C. Thus, in the order of succession he comes immediately after Anaximenes, the last representative of the Milesian School; and in fact he seems to have followed the Milesian method of seeking for a universal principle, a substance of which all things are made. Two elements had already figured in that capacity, Water and Air. Heracleitus supersedes them by a third, which is Fire. He appeals to its function as a universal medium of exchange. 'As goods are given for gold and gold for goods, so everything is given for fire and fire for everything.' Our philosopher

would have entered heartily into the modern speculation that every form of energy is electric and the whole material world merely so much congealed electricity.

For Heracleitus fire is what we now call the Absolute, the eternally self-existent reality underlying all appearance. 'This order of things (κόσμος), the same for all, was not made by any god or any man, but was and is and will be for ever, a living fire, kindled by measure and quenched by measure.' If any one likes to call the eternal One by the consecrated name of Zeus he may, only on the understanding, as seems to be hinted, that it is not to be the Zeus of the poets, 'a magnified non-natural man,' but an impersonal power, and a relation rather than a substance.

There is an obvious contradiction in describing fire as both ever-living and as alternately kindled and quenched. And the Ephesian sage would not have hesitated for a moment to acknowledge that there was a contradiction. For, according to him, contradiction is the central fact of existence, the spring, as we should say now, that makes the wheels of the universe go round. In human affairs this is clear enough. 'War is the father and king of all things': it originates our social distinctions, 'making some gods and others men,

some slaves and others free.' 'Homer was wrong in wishing strife to perish; and he ought to be flogged out of the competitive games.'

It seems likely that the contempt of Heracleitus for Pythagoras may be explained by the same cause that accounts for his depreciatory estimate of Homer. When the Samian philosopher divided the great principles of nature into a series of antithetical couples he was right; but his whole system was vitiated by the failure to perceive that these opposites are necessary to each other's existence, that the whole frame of things is determined by their conflict and interplay. And that is just what makes fire so representative an element, so fit a type of the world-pervading law. Fire lives by struggling with and assimilating its own opposites, perishing at the moment of its complete triumph. Speaking more accurately, it only seems to perish, living again as air, whose birth is the death of fire, as similarly water lives by the death of air, earth by the death of water, and fire once more by the death of earth.

5. **The Flux.**—This endless process of transformation was summed up by the Greeks in two words, not known to have been used by Heracleitus himself, but admirably expressing his

philosophy: πάντα ῥεῖ—all things flow. In some instances the universal flux is attested by the evidence of our senses: no man bathes twice in the same river; in others we know it by reason: 'a new sun rises every day'—a conclusion deduced, we must suppose, from the fact that our own fires need perpetual supplies of fresh fuel to keep them burning. Solid earth must have proved, in more senses than one, a hard nut for the theory to crack; for thousands of years had still to pass before science could show that the most quiescent bodies are composed of molecules in a state of perpetual rotation and revolution. Probably Heracleitus argued that as earth is potentially fire, water, and air, it must partake in some way not evident to our imperfect senses of their mobility and evasiveness.

That which in material bodies presents the appearance of a perpetual flowing from one form to another, assumes in our sensations, appetites, and ideas the still higher aspect of a universal relativity. 'If all things were turned to smoke the nostrils would distinguish them'; and in fact 'souls do smell in the underworld';—where, as seems to be implied, everything is smoke. Fishes find salt water life-sustaining which to men is poisonous. 'Asses prefer chopped straw to gold.'

'Swine bathe in mud, fowls in dust or ashes.' 'The most beautiful ape is ugly when compared with a man; the wisest or most beautiful man would be an ape compared with the gods.' 'Good and evil are one. Physicians expect to be paid for inflicting all sorts of torments on their patients.' 'We should not know there was such a thing as justice did injustice not exist.' 'To God'—or, as we should say, from the absolute point of view—'all things are fair and good and just. The distinction between just and unjust is human.' 'God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, plenty and famine.' Yet for us also the union of opposites holds good. 'Health, goodness, satiety, and rest are made pleasant by sickness, evil, hunger, and fatigue.'

6. **The Logos.**—Heracleitus might have pushed his negation of all the usual distinctions embalmed in common sense to a system of dissolving scepticism, in which every fixed principle, whether of knowledge or of action, would have disappeared. But he did not go to that extreme. After the doctrine of fire as the world element, after the dogma of an all-pervading relativity, comes the third and greatest idea of his philosophy, the idea of universal law and order. We have already

come across it in that great sentence describing the Cosmos as an ever-living fire kindled and quenched 'according to measure.' The meaning is that fire transforms itself into water, water into earth, and so on on a basis of strict quantitative equivalence, so much of the one being paid in and so much of the other paid out. To the same effect we are told elsewhere that 'the sun will not transgress his measures, or the Erinyes who guard Justice will find him out.' In Greek mythology the Erinyes had for their original function to avenge the violated sanctities of blood-relationship, and more particularly to punish the crime of matricide, a function subsequently extended to the punishment of all crime. By a crowning generalisation they are here thought of as the guardians of natural law in the widest sense.

Our philosopher calls this world-wide law by a name which had a great future before it. It is no other than the Logos, so familiar to us as the Word, proclaimed in the proem to St. John's Gospel, which became incarnate in Jesus Christ. St. John had derived it perhaps from Philo of Alexandria, Philo from the Stoics, and the Stoics from Heracleitus. To the Ephesian sage also, as to the fourth Evangelist, the Logos is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world—

the reason within him by which the cosmic Reason is revealed, his individual portion of the universal fire. For just as Anaximenes had assimilated the breath of life, the animating and sustaining spirit of man, with the all-constituting Air, Heracleitus assigns the same twofold activity to his elemental Fire. It was a common principle in Greek philosophy that like knows like: and so the burning stream of consciousness within us recognises the eternal flux without—recognises it also as reasonable, or rather as more reasonable in proportion to its vastly greater dominion and duration.

Agreement, community, identity are the essential notes of reality and reason. It will be remembered that the eternal order was, in modern phraseology, established as objectively true by being the same for all men. 'All human laws draw their sustenance from the one divine law'; and to judge things truly we should hold fast to the common reason, even more forcibly than good citizens cling to the law of the State, which they defend like the city-wall, putting down the insolent self-assertion and arrogance of individuals. Individual sovereignty and the right of private judgment divorced from reason are fantastic illusions. Such individuality is at its

height when we are asleep and dreaming, each of us in a world of his own. When we are awake it is the same world for all.

Not that Heracleitus believes in the wisdom of the majority as an infallible guide. 'Most people are foolish and bad; the good are few, and one man is worth ten thousand if he be the best.' Nevertheless personal authority should go for nothing; arguments not words are the thing. Unfortunately argument is thrown away on the generality; as we saw, asses prefer chopped straw to gold. And the law of relativity itself explains why the law is not understood. Fire is only intelligible to the soul of fire, to the *dry* soul. Degenerating minds in which the vital spark turns to water are thrown out of touch with the essence of things: theirs is a savour of death unto death. More particularly our prophet's own countrymen, the Ephesians, are a hopelessly irreformable set with a vicious hatred for superior persons as such. Better if the adult population were all to hang themselves and leave the city to their children.

Such utterances are marked with the essentially aristocratic stamp of early Greek thought. It is probable that in the case of Heracleitus this contemptuous estimate of the vulgar was accentu-

ated by a rationalistic disdain for the new popular religion. When he observes that the ritual of Dionysus would be shameless indecency were it not an act of divine worship, his reference, standing alone, might be meant for no more than an illustration of the universal relativity. But when taken in company with his attack on the Bacchic mysteries and the prevalent rage for secret ceremonies of all kinds, the words can only be interpreted as an unequivocal condemnation of the Orphic revival. Plato spoke no otherwise of the same manifestations a hundred and twenty years later, and Huxley's comments on Salvationism are less severe.

7. Xenophanes.—Among those whom Heracleitus mentions as examples of learning without intelligence Xenophanes is one. In the order of time this philosopher, an Ionian of Colophon, precedes the great Ephesian; but for our purposes he may be most conveniently studied in connection with a school developed in express opposition to the theory of a perpetual flux.

I have called Xenophanes a philosopher; but he was primarily rather a poet of alert and many-sided interests who spent a long life wandering about Hellas and making a profession of reciting

his own compositions at the banquets of the rich. It would appear that the conversation at such social gatherings largely consisted in repeating fabulous stories about the quarrels of Titans and Centaurs; and we know from Homer that scandalous ballads about the amours of gods and goddesses were sometimes part of the entertainment. Xenophanes wished to introduce a higher tone, and as a preliminary he attacks the mythology of the old poets with uncompromising vigour. 'Homer and Hesiod,' he exclaims, 'have attributed to the gods everything that is a shame and reproach among men—theft, adultery, and mutual deception.' But not to think of the gods as like bad men is merely the first step in true religion; we should not think of them as like men at all. 'Mortals think that the gods are generated, that they have senses, a voice, and a body like their own. The Ethiopians fancy that their deities are black-skinned and snub-nosed; the Thracians give theirs fair hair and blue eyes. If oxen or lions had hands and could paint they too would make gods in their own image.'

So much for the aristocratic, Olympian religion of the poets. As to the popular Chthonian religion of the mysteries, with its suffering and dying gods, he is reported to have dismissed it

with even briefer and more cutting sarcasm. Asked by the Eleates should they sacrifice to Leucothea and mourn for her or not, he advised them not to mourn if they believed her to be a goddess, not to sacrifice if they believed her to be a woman.

For himself Xenophanes, like Anaximander, believed in an infinite source of existence; but, unlike his Milesian predecessor, he identified this one and eternal element with the visible earth, which he supposed to stretch downward beneath our feet without end. This infinite and eternal reality is God and the only God, resembling mortals neither in form nor thought, but perceiving and thinking through its whole extent.

We are told that Xenophanes created palæontology, pointing to the impressions of marine animals and plants found embedded in the quarries of Syracuse as evidence that what is now dry land was once water, teaching also that it would at some future period be covered with water once more—a theory probably suggested by Anaximander's idea that man was evolved from a fish-like creature.

8. **Parmenides.**—Interesting in himself, Xenophanes interests us still more as the immediate

predecessor of Parmenides, the poet-thinker to whom Elea, an otherwise obscure Ionian colony in Southern Italy, owes its immortal renown. Grown to manhood, as would seem, early in the fifth century B.C., and therefore a contemporary of the great Persian war, Parmenides comes a little later than Heracleitus, as whose polar opposite and complement he appears in the history of Greek philosophy. In point of genius there can be no comparison between them, Heracleitus was so much the greater of the two; indeed it is only within the last century that we have been able to appreciate his astonishing genius at something like its true value. At the same time, Parmenides had a more typically Greek mind, and therefore he counts for more in the history of Greek thought; indeed from Plato on his ideas dominate its evolution to the end.

It will be remembered that Pythagoras (or his followers) conceived reality under the form of so many antithetical couples, confronting each other in unreconciled opposition; the Limit and the Unlimited, the One and the Many, Rest and Motion, Light and Darkness, being the most conspicuous among them. And it will also be remembered that Heracleitus, while fully admitting the existence of such a pervading antithesis,

refused to admit it as absolute. According to his interpretation, the members of each couple are necessary to each other's existence, are always passing into one another, are in truth at bottom the same thing. Now Parmenides, starting also from the Pythagorean conception, utterly rejects this theory, and even reacts so violently against it as to deny reality to what may be called the negative side of the antithesis. There are no such things as infinity, plurality, change, or darkness. The whole of being is one uniform, unchangeable, limited, luminous sphere, without parts, without a beginning, and without an end. He describes it in verses of great power and dignity, which may be translated as follows:

'——The Whole extends continuously,
Being by Being set, immovable,
Subject to the restraint of mighty bonds,
Both increate and indestructible,
Since birth and death have wandered far away,
By true conviction into exile driven.
The same in self-same place and by itself
Abiding doth abide most firmly fixed,
And bounded round by strong Necessity.
Wherefore a holy law forbids that Being
Should be without a bound, else want were there,
And want of that would be a want of all.'

To us moderns, with our habitual prostration before the idea of infinity, this dogmatic con-

clusion seems anything but self-evident; and 'to be without a bound' strikes one as a proof of affluence rather than of destitution; but Parmenides here shows himself a true Greek, for to the Hellenic genius a boundary was associated with finish rather than with finitude.

9. **The Theory of Being.**—It has been suggested that the Parmenidean conception of Being as something without movement, variety, or change is not meant to describe the world of sense and experience, but rather the hidden reality that underlies sensible appearances, the world as revealed to pure intelligence, the 'thing in itself' of modern metaphysics. This, however, is an entire misconception. Early Greek thought had not risen to the idea of a fundamental distinction between reality and appearance; the delusions it recognised were occasional, accidental, individual errors of perception, not inherent in human perception as such. What is more, Parmenides leaves no sort of doubt as to his meaning. He tells us that only what *is* can be conceived or even spoken of; the non-existent is also the unthinkable. Moreover, what is can never not have been, can never cease to be. In other words, what most philosophers still believe

of the world as a whole, what most men of science till lately believed of material atoms or of the smallest pulses of energy—that they are 'both increate and indestructible'—this Parmenides believed so absolutely and universally that for him the conviction excluded the possibility even of movement and change. Suppose a body passes from one place to another, or suppose its colour to be altered, say, from green to red—in either case something that was has ceased to be, something is now that was not before. And so the very first law of existence would be broken, being would be identical with non-being, in fact just what was taught by Heracleitus, whose very words are quoted in this connection as a vain thing.

There is another and even stronger reason for interpreting the absolute reality of Eleatic philosophy as no mysterious ideal existence, but a direct object of sensuous perception. Parmenides describes it as not only bounded, but as shaped like a perfect sphere, extending equally in all directions from a central point. And his words so evidently apply to the visible world that all subsequent thinkers who came under his influence continued for many centuries to regard the material universe as a perfect sphere.

This conception had its root in a great scientific discovery—no less a discovery than that the earth is a globe. Before Parmenides no Greek was aware of the fact, nor perhaps was any Oriental astronomer. Thales and his successors were, in more senses than one, quite at sea on the subject. Xenophanes, with every opportunity, through a long life, of assimilating the most advanced ideas of his age, thought that the earth stretched downwards to infinity. Now, whether Parmenides himself actually discovered the earth's sphericity is not quite certain. We can only say that there is good authority for believing that he did. That he knew it to be a fact is therefore highly probable. And this fact, so astounding, so contrary to common opinion, would influence his whole way of thinking. Its suggestiveness would, so to speak, go to his head. A sphere is the one absolutely perfect thing in experience, excluding change, excluding variety, without beginning or end, the very type of what is finished. And now it turns out that earth, the greatest thing we know, is a sphere. No more remained than to represent all existence on the same model and to invest it with every imaginable perfection.

Astronomy was not the only positive science

that influenced the thought of Parmenides. As a South Italian Greek he must have come into touch with the Pythagoreans; indeed we have seen reason to believe that his severe monism was a protest against their dualistic view of nature. And apart from such ultimate questions he would have much to learn from them about geometry, in which they were at that time the world's acknowledged masters. Now geometry is the science of space; and it will be found on examination that Parmenides in enumerating the properties of Being almost identifies them with the properties of absolute space. It is extended, continuous, homogeneous, unchanging, with parts completely immovable among one another. He did not indeed conceive it as infinite; but for the Greek philosophers, as for modern mathematicians, the infinity of space remained an open question.

What really differentiated his view from ours was the ascription of intelligence to that rigid unalterable sphere. We habitually think of mind as the inextended; to Parmenides mind and extension were one and the same. And we need only place ourselves at his point of view to see why this should be. From the beginning Greek thought had retained much of that animism which is the sole philosophy of primitive men.

Not to repeat what has already been pointed out in the case of the Milesian School, Xenophanes in identifying the world with God had described it as perceiving and thinking through its whole infinite extent. And Heracleitus had represented the reasonable principle within ourselves as a fiery particle, able by virtue of its common nature to recognise and act in harmony with the cosmic fire by which the universe is shaped and directed. Parmenides moves on the same lines with his predecessors, but goes a step beyond them. According to him mind and its object are not merely akin; they are the same. Nor indeed was any other conclusion compatible with the first principle of his system, that difference neither does nor can exist. Or again, we may say that the world without has been simplified down to pure extension; the world within has been simplified down to pure reason, which, as it merely repeats and reflects that external uniformity, is logically indistinguishable from it.

After his uncompromising enunciation of absolute truth, Parmenides made the concession to common opinion of writing a sequel to his First Philosophy on the lines of old Ionian speculation, in which a place is given to those negative elements of darkness, cold, and opacity which he had begun

by dismissing as unthinkable. A theory of evolution found its place here, leading up to what would now be called a materialistic view of mind, as determined by the excess of some one element in the composition of man's bodily organisation. But these were accommodations to the world's opinions that the world has willingly let die. It was by his relentless paradoxes, not by his contemptuous concessions, that Parmenides exercised a decisive influence on the subsequent courses of thought. And it was through their combination with the almost equally daring paradoxes of Heracleitus that the element of truth contained in the respective systems of these two great men told for all that it was worth.

CHAPTER III

THE ANALYTICAL PHILOSOPHERS

1. Zeno of Elea.—Parmenides seems never to have made more than one disciple. This was a young Eleate named Zeno, to whom he was united not only by common opinions but by the bonds of devoted private affection. Yet closely as they agree in principle, the two thinkers belong to distinct ages with widely contrasted tendencies and methods: the one dogmatic, the other argumentative; the one more comprehensive, the other more analytic; the one potent to unite and simplify; the other excelling in subtlety and minuteness.

What struck people most about the philosophy of Parmenides was that it denied motion; and to such a laughter-loving race as the Greeks this paradox gave much occasion for ridicule. Zeno came to his master's assistance by showing, or attempting to show, that the idea of motion involves greater difficulties than its denial; and

this he did by a series of examples whose interest is not exhausted even for the speculation of our own times. His most celebrated puzzle is that known as Achilles and the tortoise. Let us suppose that there is a race between the two, and that the tortoise is allowed a start, say, of ten feet; then Achilles will never overtake his slow-footed competitor, for while he is getting over the first ten feet the tortoise will have accomplished, say, one foot, or as much less than that as you please. Anyhow it will be some measurable distance, however small. Then while Achilles is traversing that space the tortoise will have advanced through the same fraction of it as before, and so on *ad infinitum*. It is no answer to say that as a matter of fact the swifter does always overtake the slower runner; the question is how space can be conceived except as infinitely divisible, and how, granting that, an infinite number of divisions can be run through in a finite time. It has been suggested as a solution that the infinite divisibility of time makes this possible. But, in fact, it only doubles the difficulty, for then we have two infinite series to be run out instead of one.

Sceptical arguments are dangerous allies to dogmatic theories; and Zeno's method might

have been turned with destructive effect against his master. For it goes to disprove the possibility of continuously extended space as a thing in itself; and this Parmenides had assumed without question; nor indeed was it questioned until thousands of years after his time.

2. **Empedocles.** — Change and motion held their own notwithstanding all that the Eleatics could say to prove their impossibility. But Parmenides by his daring paradoxes had brought into full view an aspect of the truth that Heracleitus, going to the opposite extreme, had tended to obscure, and that common sense had yet to learn as something self-evident when it was once stated. This was the perpetuity through all change of a reality underlying appearance, a substance that is neither created nor destroyed. We may say that the Ionians had practically assumed the existence of such a substance, variously identifying it with one of the so-called elements,—water, air, earth, or fire. But their analysis had been what chemists call qualitative rather than quantitative. They did not sharply formulate the generalisation that matter persists through all metamorphoses without loss or gain. Heracleitus alone, with his wonderful sagacity,

grazed but did not grasp this law. Fully to realise it was reserved for the inferior genius of Empedocles.

Empedocles stands as an isolated, somewhat problematic, figure among the early Greek philosophers. By exception he was not an Ionian but a Dorian; by exception not an aristocrat but a democrat. His restless and insatiable vanity also makes an unpleasant contrast with the singular personal majesty of the rest. For the first though not for the last time in history, he makes us feel that to be a charlatan and a great thinker are not incompatible predicates.

His birthplace may have had something to do with his ambiguous character and attitude. This was Acragas, the modern Girgenti, a Sicilian city, renowned for the luxury of its inhabitants and the splendour of its public edifices, still as ruins pre-eminent among the glories of Doric architecture. It was a chief seat of the Chthonian religion, whose two great goddesses, Demeter and Persephoné, were especial objects of popular worship. Standing, moreover, almost on the frontier between Hellenic and Phœnician civilisation, Acragas was exposed in a peculiar way to the evil influences of Semitic example with the least restraint from the old Greek traditions of

Sophrosyné, of self-knowledge and self-control. Empedocles tells his countrymen that he walked through the Sicilian cities crowned with garlands, honoured as an immortal god, followed by crowds of men and women entreating him to heal their diseases, to give them oracles, to show them the way to gain.

What the multitude asked from Empedocles was no more than his philosophy undertook to give. His disciples were to learn the arts by which old age is warded off, the winds controlled, and the dead restored to life.

Our prophet claimed, in fact, to be nothing less than a fallen divinity, who in some far distant pre-natal stage of existence had stained himself with bloodshed, and was condemned as an expiation of his guilt to pass through a long cycle of existences, vegetable, animal, and human, as a dweller in the water, in the air, or on the earth. Apparently the period of purification was now nearly complete, and his restoration to the abodes of the blessed in sight. Like the sages of the Far East he preaches the kinship of all living things, the sacredness of animal life, and the pollution incurred by eating meat. A deep vein of Oriental pessimism also enters into his theory of existence.

Standing alone such utterances might be interpreted as no more than an enthusiastic expression of the new Orphic religion, derived proximately from the Pythagorean schools of South Italy. The puzzling thing is that they have come down to us in close association with a thoroughly materialistic philosophy, where no place seems to be left for an immortal human soul, and hardly even for gods, except as poetic names for the elements and forces of nature. Empedocles lived towards the middle of the fifth century B.C. One is tempted to think of him as a 'modernist' in reference to the religion of his age, giving a mythological colouring to speculations really destructive of all mythology.

3. **The Four Elements.**—'No wise man,' the Sicilian philosopher tells us, 'would imagine that [mortals] had no existence before their birth, and will have none after their dissolution.' These words might be taken to imply the soul's eternity. But probably they mean no more than that the body is composed of imperishable parts. Empedocles is credibly reported to have been a pupil of Parmenides; and he repeats the master's assertion that what is can neither begin nor cease to be, but without pushing it to the extent of denying

all reality to change and motion. What men call birth and death are simply a mixture and separation of pre-existing substances. Fire, air, earth, and water are the ultimate elements whence all things arise and into which they return. Each of these had been erected by one or other of the Ionian thinkers into the sole principle of nature: Empedocles follows the facile method of eclectics in every age by granting equal rights to all. And his philosophy has left a permanent stamp on language which the discoveries of modern chemistry have not been able to efface.

4. **Love and Strife.**—The tendency to harmonise and combine carries him on to a further and more daring speculative effort. Parmenides has to be reconciled not only with common sense but also with Heracleitus. Experience tells us that the world is not now constituted as a perfect homogeneous sphere in the way dreamed of at Elea; but that happy consummation has been reached already in the eternal revolutions of existence, and will be reached again. Two powers control the universal process, Love and Strife; Love drawing the elements into one, Strife tearing them apart; and the whole world-cycle passes through four phases distinguished by

their alternating predominance and decline. As Love gains ground things draw together; when it triumphs they are united in the perfect sphere, but only to fly asunder on their way to complete separation when Strife becomes lord of the ascendant. We are now on the down-grade; that is to say, we are living in a period of increasing differentiation and ever greater subjection of nature to the law of Strife. Empedocles may have been led to this gloomy diagnosis by the sentence in which Heracleitus speaks of war as the father of all things.

Love and Strife answer in some ways to the attractive and repulsive forces of modern science. But they are conceived as material or at least as extended objects, with just as much, or as little, self-consciousness as the four elements. We ourselves are composed of all six; and as like is only known by like, we recognise the presence of each in the external world through that portion of it which helps to make up our separate individuality.

5. **Theory of Sensation.** — A current phrase speaks of the external world as known to us through the channels of sense. The phrase is now merely metaphorical, but it contains a

reminiscence of what Empedocles thought literal truth. He imagined that streams of material particles emanated from the bodies about us, and that these made their way through certain minute passages or pores with which the organs of sense are supplied, thus producing the characteristic sensation by which the element within is enabled to recognise the element from without as akin to itself. There is an exact adaptation between the particles and the pores of the same element, so that fire, for example, is only penetrable by fire, and water by water. By this theory, much more than by his ambitious cosmology, Empedocles showed himself an original and progressive thinker, in harmony, like Zeno, with the minutely analytical tendencies of his age, and contributing far more than Zeno to the subsequent development of speculation.

6. **Glimpses of Modern Science.** — Like his Ionian predecessors the wonder-working Acragantine poet has a place in the history of science no less than in the history of philosophy. He divined the truth that light travels with an appreciable velocity; he knew that the revolution of one body round another can only be maintained by the composition of two forces, a centrifugal

and a centripetal; and he recognised the sexual reproduction of plants. He even suggested the famous doctrine of the non-survival of the unfit, afterwards borrowed from him by Lucretius. And if we could take the account already referred to of his triumphal progress through Sicily as less an expression of intoxicated personal vanity than a dream of the victories in store for human knowledge, no Greek would be so justly entitled to the name of a prophet.

7. **Melissus.**—Empedocles founded no school. After him the scene changes once more to East Hellas, and the language of philosophy relapses from poetry to sober prose. But through all external vicissitudes the new method of infinitesimal analysis is maintained, leading to fresh conquests in the invisible world. Change of scene was indeed the best possible security for continued progress. It saved speculation from sinking into a routine. Unlike Moab, the Greek genius did not 'settle on its lees,' but was 'emptied from vessel to vessel,' escaping the reproach of a taste that remains and a scent that is not changed.

In East Hellas, as in Sicily, the problem was to reconcile Heracleitus with Parmenides, the theory

of an unceasing flux with the theory of an unchanging reality. We may assume that the Ephesian philosophy was well known and widely canvassed in those parts ever since its first introduction, seeing that its fame had spread within a few years to Italy. And we have proof positive that the Eleatic philosophy was studied in Ionia by a contemporary of Empedocles, the Samian admiral Melissus, who defeated an Athenian fleet in the year 440 B.C. This remarkable man, the only speculative sailor mentioned in all history, wrote a prose treatise, of which considerable fragments survive, reproducing the main ideas of Parmenides with some important variations. Unlike the master, he declared that the eternal reality was without a bound—identifying it, as would seem, with infinite space; and while denying movement or multiplicity to absolute Being, he allows them at least a place in thought as illusions of sense. Such an enlargement of view meant much, how much will be apparent when we come to study the grandest result of early Greek thought, the Atomic Theory.

8. **Atomism.** — Before explaining how the theory of atoms arose, let me explain what it means. Atomism implies first of all that matter,

or the substance of which bodies are composed, while it occupies space and is therefore extended, is not, like pure space, continuous, but discrete. That is, it consists of perfectly distinct and separate parts, moving about in void space, solid, indivisible, impenetrable, differing from one another only in size and shape, capable of being united together in mechanical groups, but only communicating with one another by external contact and collision. In the next place, the atoms are so small as to lie beyond the reach of our senses; but, assuming space to be infinitely extended, they are infinite in number, for otherwise the universe would in the course of infinite ages have disappeared by dissipation into the surrounding void. They are also eternal; for the least tendency to decay acting through endless time would equally have involved their total annihilation before the present date. And, being indestructible, there is no reason to suppose that they ever began to exist, not to mention the general inconceivability that out of nothing something could arise.

Evidently the atom of Greek philosophy is an incomparably more meagre idea than the atom of modern science with its formidable outfit of energies, conceived as endowed with gravitation,

cohesion, elasticity, radio-activity, electro-magnetic properties, and chemical affinities. At the same time we must remember that all this elaborate mechanism has been built up stone by stone on the simple foundation supplied by the constructive genius of two Ionian Greeks, Leucippus, whose birth-place is unknown, and Democritus, a native of Abdera on the barbarous Thracian coast, enjoying little popularity in their lifetime and unhonoured after death even by the inheritors who traded most successfully on their discoveries.

9. **Leucippus.**—From the scanty information supplied to us on the subject it appears that Leucippus, the real founder of atomism, lived a little after Empedocles and Melissus. Generalising from the doctrine of subtle material emanations as the cause of external perception, put forward by the one, he would form the conception of multitudinous invisible particles as the basis of all real existence. And the infinite space of the other, dissociated from its material contents, would supply him with the equally essential conception of a void giving full scope for their movement and interplay. By a remarkable anticipation of what is now called atomicity he supposed that

these particles or at least some of them were supplied with little hooks by which they became woven into chains and membranes, ultimately forming, so to speak, the cell-wall of a closed universe, within which the cosmic evolution of order out of chaos was conducted. 'Nothing,' he said, 'happens by chance, everything by law and necessity'—or, as we should say, by purely mechanical causation.

For the original cause of motion Greek atomism refers us to weight, which at that time seemed to be an inseparable quality of matter. It had not yet been discovered that the fall of heavy bodies was connected with a tendency to move towards the centre of the earth; nor was it known that bodies falling in a vacuum move with equal velocities, so that collisions between them cannot occur. Accordingly Leucippus credited all his atoms alike with a downward motion through infinite space; and he supposed that the larger atoms, having a greater velocity than the smaller, would overtake, collide, and become entangled with them. As the knowledge of astronomy and physics spread, the inconsistency of this primitive atomism with natural law came to be understood, and therefore no man of science after Democritus ever adopted it in antiquity,

although the contrary has been stated by ill-informed literary critics in our own day.

10. **Democritus.**—Democritus seems to have adopted the atomic theory of Leucippus without any essential modification. What distinguishes him as a philosopher is the enormous range of his interests. We have seen that the love of knowledge for its own sake was recognised at a very early time as the characteristic feature in philosophy. Democritus expressed this passion vividly by saying, 'I had rather discover a single new explanation than be King of Persia.' But his ambition went beyond a knowledge of things, which, taken alone, is merely science. He asked what was the nature of knowledge itself, thus giving a still wider extension to philosophy, of which that question has ever since formed an integral part. And he seems to have been the first to point out the distinction, since grown so familiar, between the two great sources of knowledge; sense which gives us the appearances, and understanding which gives us the reality, of things. He owed it to the atomic theory. Atomism is a reasonable inference from our sensations, but, at the same time, in a way, it denies them. As he puts it, 'sweet and bitter, hot and cold, exist by

convention'—or, as we now say, subjectively—'colour exists by convention; in reality, atoms and the void.' So little truth is there in the reproach commonly brought against the materialists, of whom Democritus was a precursor, that they believe nothing but the evidence of their senses.

11. **Moral Philosophy.**—Philosophy, however, is not complete even when we have added a theory of knowing to our theory of being. Man is by nature not only contemplative but active, and even more active than contemplative. Accordingly if we would attain true universality, to those other theories a theory of practice must be added. And just as he who takes all knowledge for his province must needs simplify the task by an effort of extreme generalisation, by going back to first principles, by singling out the fundamental element, or the original cause, or the widest law of things, or again by fixing on the true criterion of knowledge, so also the supreme master of practice will make it his object to pick out from the infinite details of social intercourse, politics, industry, and fine art, the absolute end to which everything else is a means, which alone gives a real value to all those multifarious activities. In a word, as the later Greeks put it, after

physics and logic comes ethics or the philosophy of conduct.

It proves the wonderful genius of Democritus as a systematising thinker that he took not only the second step but the third. Here also, as in the case of the Milesian school, with their general theories of the world as a natural growth, the absence of an organised priesthood teaching a fixed theology was essential to speculative freedom. After the first outburst of scientific speculation there had indeed been a danger that the great religious revival we call Orphicism might intervene to check its further progress, at least in the direction of bringing conduct also under natural law; and not to speak of the Pythagoreans, there are very marked symptoms in Empedocles of a desire to keep well with the mystical movement, a nervous anxiety to disclaim too great freedom of thought. Now, for the atomists at least there could be no such obscurantist leanings. While formally acknowledging the possible existence of superhuman beings, their theory left no place for gods in any true sense of the word: in a world where the atoms alone were eternal, where necessity and mechanical law alone ruled, there could be neither creation, nor providence, nor immortality.

Democritus in fact boldly explained theology as a primitive personification of natural objects.

At the time when Democritus taught, which seems to have been in the last third of the fifth century B.C., ethics was, as it still continues to be, much less advanced than physical science. But the facts of moral experience being better known left less room for error. Thus what he had to say on the subject took the form of proverbial philosophy, of short sentences, true so far as they go, but not worked up into systematic form. They are not inspired by the great social enthusiasm of Plato and the Stoics; but neither is there the low standard vulgarly supposed to go with philosophical materialism. The highest end is declared to be a contented mind, which is won by avoiding excess and by fixing the desires not on sensual indulgences but on imperishable things. Sins are to be avoided not from fear but from a sense of duty. Goodness is not abstinence from doing wrong, but from the wish to do wrong. Encouragement and persuasion are a better training to virtue than law and compulsion. The whole world is the fatherland of a good soul. Yet our aphorist is too genuine a Greek to merge political duty in a vague cosmopolitanism. He tells us to put the interests of the state above all

others, not grasping at more power for ourselves than is good for the community. For a well-administered city best secures the safety of all.

Democritus has been called 'the laughing philosopher' because a late legend describes him as always making merry over the follies and vices of mankind. As it happens this silly story is sufficiently answered by one of his own maxims. 'Men should not laugh but mourn over each other's misfortunes.' And to those who know Heracleitus at first hand the parallel designation of him as 'the weeping philosopher' must seem an equally infelicitous description of his lofty contempt for the common herd.

12. **Anaxagoras.**—Anaxagoras of Clazomenae, who has been reserved for the last place in this chapter, was older than any of the thinkers who have so far been dealt with in it; but as a link with the schools of Athens it will be found more convenient to discuss his teaching after that of the atomists, with the earliest form of which he may have had some acquaintance.

Our informants tell us that Anaxagoras was born about 500 B.C., that he settled in Athens when entering on middle age, and remained there for thirty years. His was the true philosophic

temperament. Asked what made life worth living, he replied, 'contemplating the heavens and the universal order.' The great statesman Pericles was his pupil and friend. Euripides is mentioned among his admirers, and is believed to have had the Ionian sage in mind when he wrote these noble lines:

'Happy is he who has learned
To search out the secret of things,
Not for the citizens' bane,
Neither for aught that brings
An unrighteous gain.
But the ageless order he sees
Of Nature that cannot die,
And the causes whence it springs,
And the how and the why.
Never have thoughts like these
To a deed of dishonour been turned.'[1]

In their religious beliefs, however, neither Pericles nor Euripides represented average public opinion at Athens. There may have been as superstitious communities in Hellas; none were so suspicious of new views or so intolerant. Possibly the wonderful cleverness of the Athenians made them more keenly alive than other Greeks to the dissolving effect of the new speculations on the old beliefs. We have seen that, in fact, from

[1] Translated by Madame Duclaux.

Thales on, the radical incompatibility between the two was becoming more and more obvious. A crisis was bound to come at last, and it came at a spot where political animosities and democratic jealousies helped to organise the forces of reactionary prejudice.

13. A Martyr of Science.—In the year 432 an attempt was made to dislodge Pericles from the position he had long occupied as the trusted leader of the Athenian people. For tactical reasons his assailants began by bringing charges of impiety against Aspasia, his wife in all but the name, the great sculptor Pheidias, whom he had employed for the embellishment of the Acropolis, and Anaxagoras. The charges against Aspasia and Pheidias were of a frivolous character and do not concern us here. Against the Clazomenian philosopher there was, unhappily, a very strong case. He taught that the sun was a red-hot mass of stone, larger than the Peloponnesus, that the stars were not fire, that the moon was an earthy body, shining by reflected light, with an irregular surface, and partially built over. Now at Athens the sun and moon passed for being blessed gods, and a pious belief prevailed that they were worshipped as such by the whole human race. To

treat them as lumps of inanimate matter seemed therefore not only irreligious but absurd.

According to some of our authorities Anaxagoras was tried for blasphemy and condemned. According to others he escaped condemnation by a timely flight from Athens. It seems certain that he ended his days at Lampsacus in an honoured old age among a people who contrived to reconcile their reverence for the sun and moon with their reverence for intellectual and moral grandeur. At his own desire the philosopher's death was annually commemorated by giving a holiday to the children of the town. His image may still be seen on the coins of his native place, Clazomenae, probably copied from a statue erected there in his honour.

14. **Qualitative Atomism.** — Democritus observed with truth that the astronomical heresies which brought Anaxagoras into such trouble were not new. Nor was it new to say—although a fragment of his states it as something paradoxical and unfamiliar — that what people commonly call becoming and perishing is really the combination and separation of pre-existent parts. For Empedocles had preceded him in starting with this assumption. The originality of An-

axagoras lay in giving this great principle an extension undreamed of by any of his predecessors or contemporaries. According to him, not only does the mass of matter remain a fixed quantity, but its qualities also are permanent, that is such properties as temperature, colour, smell, and the like. There is always the same amount of these in the world, more or less latent, more or less apparent, as they are more or less confused or distinct. In the beginning the confusion was infinite; analysis might have gone on for ever without arriving at an ultimate element that did not combine all shapes, temperatures, colours, smells, and tastes. What the atomists declared to exist only 'by convention,' or in modern parlance 'subjectively,' is 'objective,' real, eternal. And even now the separation of qualities is not perfect. Everything contains a trace of everything else. What we say of human nature, that no man is quite without good or without evil, without wisdom or without folly, Anaxagoras said of all nature.

15. **Nous.**—How then from the primal confusion did the present world of order, of at least relative distinction arise? The answer is strong and simple. 'All things were together: then

Nous (Reason) came and disposed them in order.' Such words suggest the idea of an intelligent First Cause; and in fact that was what Greek readers at first took them to mean. But it has always remained doubtful what Anaxagoras himself understood by Nous. In some respects he clearly conceived it as like human reason, but with far greater powers. It 'knows everything about everything and controls everything.' On the other hand, if not exactly a material, it is an extended substance, 'the thinnest and purest of all things,'—unmixed with the elements, and enabled by this absolute separateness, of which it is a unique example, to act on them. Its action, however, is of a merely mechanical kind, and has no other effect than to set up a vortical movement by which the component elements of the original mixture are segregated, what is unlike being parted and what is like being thrown together.

If, as seems the only possible interpretation of his words, Parmenides identified pure reason with pure space or extension, we may presume that Anaxagoras adopted this view from the Eleatic philosophy. Some modern thinkers have called space 'the possibility of movement'; and paradoxical as the idea may seem to us, an ancient

thinker may well have expressed the connection between the two by saying that space was the cause of motion. Such a confusion had, indeed, already become quite incredible to Plato and Aristotle. They supposed that when Anaxagoras talked about Reason as an ordering power he meant something like the reason of an architect or a legislator; and so when in the sequel they found him treating the evolution of the universe as a process of mechanical causation they could not reconcile such materialism in the details of the system with the spiritualism of its first principle. On the other hand, the modern interest in evolution as at first an unconscious process and only becoming self-reflective in its last stages, gives us perhaps a clearer insight into the true significance of Nous than was possible to the great founders of idealism. To describe it as an anticipation of Herbert Spencer would of course be an anachronism. Yet there is at least a germ of the 'differentiation and integration' that Spencer made so much of in the activity ascribed to the cosmic Nous by Anaxagoras. And perhaps it was the consciousness of their own reason as a discriminating and identifying faculty that led both philosophers to look on all nature as exemplifying the same process on a far vaster scale.

16. **Diogenes of Apollonia.**—As it happens, the Greek word of which differentiation is the exact equivalent was first brought into use by Diogenes of Apollonia, a second-rate Dorian eclectic who popularised the study of natural philosophy at Athens by combining the doctrine of Anaxagoras with that of Anaximenes. Anaximenes had taught that Air was the fundamental principle of existence, the substance out of which all things are made, the animating soul of man and the great conservative force of nature. Diogenes took the further step of identifying this elemental Air with the Nous, thus, as might seem, giving more prominence to the material and mechanical side of the latter. In point of fact, however, he laid more stress than Anaxagoras on the evidences of design in nature, the beautiful harmonies of which, according to him, could only be explained as the work of an intelligent cause.

During the fifth century great progress was made by the Greeks in the study of physiology; and this science came to exercise an even more decisive influence on speculation than mathematics and astronomy. We see this in Diogenes, who was indeed a doctor by profession; and the idea of differentiation, to which, as has been said, he first gave a name, would be especially brought

home to him by his knowledge of the human organism, affording as this does a most complete example of the division of labour. Of course the uses of its various parts were then very imperfectly understood; but Diogenes was sagacious enough to conjecture that the vascular system, of which he wrote a careful account, had something to do with the distribution of air—or, as we should say, oxygen—over the whole body; and he acutely explained the absence of intelligence in plants to their want of such a system.

17. **Aristophanes.** — Aristophanes, the great comic dramatist of the age, wrote a play called *The Clouds*, satirising the philosophers, in the year 423 B.C., and from this we can gather that the system of Diogenes was then the fashionable philosophy at Athens. The poet had no eye for the religious value of the new theories, regarding them solely as an impious attempt to substitute material agencies for the time-honoured Olympian divinities, with the belief in whom he conceived the interests of private morality to be inseparably bound up. In this respect he thoroughly represented the public opinion of Athens, already exhibited in the persecution of Anaxagoras, and destined under the guidance of the greatest

Athenian thinkers to lead Greek philosophy away from the physical studies it had pursued with such success into other directions more in harmony with the religious genius of the city where it was henceforth to find a home.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOPHISTS

1. **Education at Athens.**—Speculative freedom, complete everywhere else in the Hellenic world, was, as we have seen, not complete at Athens. But in that city which called herself the school of Greece, education always remained free, to this extent at least, that it was a matter of individual enterprise. Although in other ways sufficiently absorbing and despotic, the State neither provided the means of instruction nor did it attempt to prescribe what the course of instruction should be. Apparently any one that liked could open a school, and fathers could send their sons to any school they liked. The system seems to have worked well. Every Athenian citizen could read to some extent, and it was considered rather disreputable not to read well. Boys of the higher classes were also taught to write, to play on the lyre, and to repeat a good deal of poetry by heart. In the best times of the republic they were also

trained to be hardy, obedient, and pure In later life some people continued to read literature besides hearing some of the greatest things that were ever written, in the theatre, and some of the greatest things that were ever spoken, in the public assemblies. Booksellers' shops existed, and there is reason to believe that even so abstruse a work as that of Anaxagoras could be bought for a drachma—a little under tenpence in our money. Educated women are mentioned as a class by Plato in the fourth century B.C., and we are told that tragedies were their favourite reading, as indeed of most persons, which, considering the austerity of the Greek tragic drama, shows a considerable refinement of taste.

What we call the higher or University education was a creation of philosophy, and had only just begun to dawn in the age of Pericles. At first young men entering on public life learned what it was essential for them to know about the world and about great affairs from some older friend to whom they were attached by ties of affectionate intimacy. Sometimes they profited also by conversing with women of genius.

Under a free government the power of speech is the surest road to success. Hence in modern democracies lawyers command a disproportionate

share of political influence. In old Athens there was no such profession: as prosecutor or as defendant every one had to plead his own cause before a large popular jury. Thus, even apart from any ambition to lead the State, every citizen was interested in mastering the arts both of cross-examination and of continuous delivery; while to men of high birth and wealth, being marked out as special objects of attack for political opponents and blackmailers, address in using the weapons of tongue-fence became even a matter of life and death. In course of time litigants made up to some extent for the want of counsel by employing a professional hand to write a speech for them which they then learned by heart and delivered in court as if it had been their own composition. This practice, however, although it might relieve the mass of Athenian citizens from the necessity of studying rhetoric as an art, left the demand for a professional training in rhetoric unaffected, as the speech-writers themselves required to be educated for their work.

2. Philosophy and Rhetoric.—Philosophy as the study of things in themselves does not seem at first sight in any way related to rhetoric—at least not to the rhetoric of law-courts and de-

liberative assemblies where human interests are the subject of discussion, and appeals to human passion the means adopted by a skilful speaker for making his opinions prevail. It must, however, be borne in mind that Greek philosophy owed its origin to the schools of science, a circumstance which from the beginning brought it into connection with the practice of teaching; that it systematised the habit of taking wide views, so characteristic, even in Homer, of Greek eloquence; that the earliest sages had something to say about man as well as about nature, while their successors gave an ever greater place to the laws of life and conduct as the evolution of thought went on; and finally that a knowledge of the world's secrets, by raising its possessor above all petty cares, interests, and prejudices, surrounded him with a certain halo of intellectual and moral superiority well calculated to impose on a Greek audience. For these reasons the two seemingly independent spheres of rhetoric and philosophy —the study of words and the study of things— expanded until they met and overlapped, a wide range of subjects being either treated as common ground or hotly disputed between the rival teachers who regarded education from opposite points of view.

It was agreed that the youth of good family, after he had left school, needed some further training as a preparation for taking part in public or private business with credit to himself and his ancestry. In other words, there was a demand for the higher education. And just as now, it was a moot-point what that education should consist of, above all what place, if any, should be held in it by religion and morality; morality more particularly occupying the very centre of the ground shared or disputed between rhetoric and philosophy. Not that a contemporary of Aristophanes used such abstract terms as religion and morality to express his meaning; but he had consecrated traditions of belief and conduct which may conveniently be summed up under those two names, and which meant for him all that religion and morality mean for us.

3. **The Sophists.**—The demand for higher education called into existence a class of teachers known as Sophists. In modern language a sophist is one who uses fallacious arguments, knowing them to be such. When Aristotle wrote, the name bore a still more opprobrious significance, for he defines it as one who reasons falsely for the sake of gain. In earlier times,

however, this was not so, for Pindar and Herodotus use sophist in an altogether creditable sense, as meaning a man of superior skill or wisdom, whether he happened to be a great philosopher or an ordinary intellectual craftsman. What seems to have first raised a prejudice against this originally honourable appellation was the emergence of certain persons who professed to teach wisdom and virtue in return for a substantial payment. Money-making as such was not thought disreputable in good Greek society, for even so haughtily aristocratic a poet as Pindar wrote odes to order. But then it must be remembered that a poem, like a picture or a statue, seems to possess a certain tangible reality making it a more appropriate equivalent for so much hard cash than such purely ideal values as wisdom and virtue, which also are universally associated with a considerable indifference to this world's goods. And this feeling would be still further strengthened by the fact that no philosopher had ever exacted a fee from his pupils.

Again, for reasons already stated, that higher education which the sophists sold to rich young men always included a training in rhetoric. Now an Athenian who was used to hear rival statesmen supporting opposite policies in the Assembly

and rival pleaders presenting mutually contradictory views of law and fact to the popular tribunals, must have had it strongly borne in on him that while one speaker was certainly wrong each in turn managed to make it seem that he was right — a clear proof that one of them at least knew the art of making the worse appear the better reason. From whom could they have learned this nefarious art but from their sophist teachers; and was it not scandalous that a class of persons should exist who made it their profession, and a very lucrative profession also, to pervert the moral principles of the community?

Again, as all philosophers were popularly called sophists, and as all attempted to explain meteorological phenomena by other than divine agencies, besides expressing more or less paradoxical opinions about the nature of things in general, the paid teachers of wisdom got the credit of what the vulgar considered the impieties and absurdities of philosophy. And so much being certain, it was easy to believe, with or without evidence, that they taught their pupils to disregard every duty but the pursuit of their own private advantage.

4. **Protagoras.**—The first and most famous of

the Sophists was Protagoras of Abdera. Born in the year 480 B.C., he became a paid teacher at thirty, and pursued that calling for a period of forty years with brilliant success, traversing the whole breadth of the Hellenic world, and, if we may judge from what seems to be the typical instance of Athens, exciting immense enthusiasm among the more enlightened classes of Greek society. Pericles debated moral problems with him, and he was employed to make laws for the Athenian colony of Thurii. On the occasion of a later visit to the imperial city public attention was drawn to the fact that Protagoras was a declared agnostic. A book of his began with the words: 'As to the gods, I do not know whether they exist or not. Life is too short for such difficult enquiries.' The author was expelled from Athens: a herald was sent round demanding the surrender of the book from all private individuals who possessed it; and the copies collected were burnt in the market-place. Protagoras himself was lost at sea on his way to Sicily. He was then nearly seventy. It may be that the treatise which gave occasion to such an outbreak of inquisitorial fanaticism had only just been written, and that the words about the shortness of life refer to the very limited time during which

the author might expect his own intellectual activity to continue.

5. **Humanism.** — Judging from the scanty materials at our disposal Protagoras was not only a great educator but also a great and original thinker. His profession of agnosticism must be read in company with another celebrated sentence quoted from the beginning of his work on Truth; 'Man is the measure of all things, determining what does, and what does not, exist.' Plato in his old age opposed to this the principle that God and not man is the true measure. That is to say, the standard of truth and good must be something ideal and beyond experience. And elsewhere he has tried to reduce the human test of reality to an absurdity by identifying it with the doctrine that when two people disagree they must both be right. It seems likely enough that Protagoras attached great importance to individual experience and conviction, to what we now call 'the point of view.' But, as Plato himself suggests, this was not inconsistent with discriminating between one person's opinion and another's with due regard to their respective authorities. And the Sophist's object would be to make his pupils better judges than they were

before, the ultimate test of rightness being reference to human interests rather than to the oracles of problematic gods.

While the standard varies from man to man, but with an appeal from the stupid and ignorant to the educated and intelligent, it also varies between ages and nations, involving a similar appeal from barbarism to civilisation, from a less to a more advanced stage of social progress. Protagoras seems to have first discovered the doctrine of human development, viewing it as above all a moral growth. Perhaps the evolutionism of early Greek science suggested this view. According to a speech put into his mouth by Plato morality is the very foundation of human life, the condition of every other art, the essential distinction between brutes and men, between savages and civilised communities. Some are born with more, and some with less capacity for acquiring virtue; but that it is an acquisition is proved, among other ways, by the existence of penal law. For punishment can only be justified as a deterrent from wrong-doing—in other words as a moralising agency.

It would appear that the method followed by Protagoras as a teacher was quite in harmony with his Humanist philosophy. While the other

Sophists gave young men the sort of scientific education that age afforded, *i.e.*, a course of arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy, he took them straight to ethics and politics, interspersing his lectures with literary illustrations from the poets. According to him, the absolutely straight lines and perfect circles of geometry are fictions to which nothing in reality corresponds; nor do the celestial movements exhibit that exact uniformity assumed by the astronomers.

6. **Hippias the Naturalist.**—That system of scientific education from which Protagoras so markedly separated himself found its most typical representative in Hippias of Elis. This very remarkable man seems to have originated the idea of natural law as the foundation of morality, distinguishing nature from the arbitrary conventions or fashions, differing according to the different times or regions in which they arise, imposed by arbitrary human enactment, and often unwillingly obeyed. He held that there is an element of right common to the laws of all countries and constituting their essential basis. He held also that the good and wise of all countries are naturally akin and should regard one another as citizens of a single state. This idea

was subsequently developed by the Cynic and still more by the Stoic schools, passing from the latter to the jurists, in whose hands it became the great instrument for converting Roman law into a legislation for all mankind.

Hippias set a high value on truth as a virtue, preferring Achilles to Ulysses on account of his superior veracity. Perhaps it was as an exercise in pure truth that he inculcated the study of mathematics. And seeing how large a part equality plays in that study also, some Greeks cherished it as a lesson in justice. Euripides may have had the method of Hippias in view when he wrote the noble lines:

> 'Honour Equality who binds together
> Both friends and cities and confederates;
> For equity is law, law equity,
> The lesser is the greater's enemy,
> And disadvantaged aye begins the strife.
> From her our measures, weights, and numbers come,
> Defined and ordered by Equality.
> So do the night's blind eye and sun's bright orb
> Walk equal courses in their yearly round,
> And neither is embittered by defeat.'

7. Prodicus.—We sometimes find the name of Prodicus associated with that of Hippias, as like him a somewhat younger contemporary of Protagoras. Both taught at Athens, and both seem to

have represented the same naturalistic tendency of thought. Plato, it is true, satirises Prodicus as a rather pedantic lecturer on the niceties of language; but in this instance we probably get a juster idea of his importance from Aristophanes, who describes him as the most remarkable of the natural philosophers for wisdom and character, and who elsewhere playfully broaches a new theory of evolution which is to send Prodicus away howling. We also hear of this Sophist as having explained the origin of religion by the personification of natural objects; and Xenophon quotes a famous apologue of his, called 'The Choice of Heracles,' breathing the very spirit of naturalistic ethics. In particular it harmonises admirably with the lines quoted above from Euripides, by showing that pleasure must either be purchased by toil or paid for by premature exhaustion.

8. **Natural Law as the right of the Stronger.** —It will be remembered that Heracleitus brought the laws of the State into connection with the great cosmic law as the source whence their energy is derived. This idea was afterwards taken up and developed by the Stoics, who also adopted the physical philosophy of Heracleitus

as the foundation of their system. Now, as the central precept of Stoicism is 'follow Nature'—an obvious summary of what Hippias and Prodicus taught—we may legitimately regard these two Sophists as worthy successors in the ethical field to the great Ephesian master.

Their appeal to nature was not, however, to pass unchallenged. If, as seems more than possible, Protagoras first turned author in his later years, his proscription of physical studies and his theory of morality as a purely human product may well be interpreted as a criticism of the attempt made by his younger rivals to found morality on natural law, more especially as their ethical method was soon twisted, in a way that must have revolted them, into a justification of the claim put forward on behalf of the stronger, whether as states or as individuals, to plunder and destroy the weaker. Thucydides represents the Athenians as openly basing their foreign policy on the law of brute force; and it has been supposed that their cynical declarations in this respect, as well as the private demoralisation described in their own literature, was the result of Sophistic teaching. Only since the last hundred years has it been made clear, chiefly by the labours of English scholars, that neither as humanists nor

as naturalists can the Sophists be justly charged with any such corrupting influence. Their principles were liable to be misrepresented or misapplied, as are the principles of any philosophy, and, we may add, of any religion; but to no greater extent than has happened, for instance, with the lessons of their great opponent, Plato. On the whole, the new ideas they put in currency were distinctly a gain to Greece and to the world.

9. **Gorgias the Anti-Naturalist.**—Gorgias of Leontini, a Sicilian teacher of rhetoric, counts among the great Sophists, while occupying a place somewhat apart from the three above considered. His principal contribution to philosophy, however, seems to associate him more nearly with Protagoras than with the naturalist couple. It is, in fact, a bold attempt to get rid of the idea of nature altogether by showing that there is no such thing. Gorgias conducts his campaign against objective reality in the paradoxical Greek style by establishing three propositions: (1) nothing is; (2) if anything existed it could not be known; (3) if it could be known the knowledge could not be communicated. For what contradicts itself cannot exist; and the philosophers

have proved with equal cogency that nature is one and many, finite and infinite, with and without change. To be known, reality should be identified with thought, whereas some thoughts evidently represent nothing real. Nor can knowledge be communicated unless words are identified with the sensations they signify, which is not the fact.

As regards virtue, Gorgias taught that it is relative to the age and social position of the person concerned, a principle that reminds us of the short modern formula for conduct—'My station and its duties.'

10. **Abolitionism.**—It was quite in consonance with the humanist spirit that Agathon, a disciple of Gorgias, should make justice a result of mutual agreement among men rather than an image of mathematical equality; and that another of his disciples, Alcidamas, should call the laws 'the bulwark of the city,' and philosophy 'the bulwark of the laws.' Yet this reverence for human law, which all over the ancient world upheld slavery as a permanent social institution, did not prevent the same Alcidamas from declaring slavery illegitimate. 'God,' according to him, 'sent all men to be free; Nature made none a slave.' That is

the greatest, most pregnant word of Greek practical philosophy. Plato and Aristotle never got so far; Aristotle even explicitly denied that for one man to treat another as an animated tool was wrong. To accomplish so great an effort of thought it seems to have been necessary that the two principles which the two rival schools of Sophisticism had opposed to one another should be combined—that the ideal of nature should be recognised in the completed humanity of man.

CHAPTER V

SOCRATES

1. Personality.—Socrates is the greatest name in the history of philosophy and at the same time its most popular, most familiar figure. J. A. Symonds tells us how the sight of a hemlock plant recalled the manner of his death to a Venetian gondolier. The charm of his personality is unique. We think of the Greek philosophers before and after him as of so many marble statues, but of him as a living, speaking human figure. Yet this figure is surrounded by a sort of mystery. It is still a question for what did he live and die. An enigma to his own age, he remains an enigma to us. If Plato may be trusted, he was even an enigma to himself. From that fame and that obscurity one fact at least emerges to begin with: the immense importance of the personal factor in his work, whatever the value of that work may turn out to be.

2. Sources of Information.—Socrates himself never wrote a line about philosophy; and although numerous reports of his conversation have been preserved, it is doubtful whether any two consecutive sentences have been put down exactly as they were uttered. Nor can the numerous busts bearing his name be relied on as faithful copies of an original portrait. It is suspected that they merely reproduce the conventional mask of a Silenus mentioned by those who remembered him, as giving a good idea of the sage's unprepossessing features. We know that he was born about 469 B.C., and that by family and fortune he belonged to the poorer class of Athenian citizens, his father being a working sculptor and his mother a midwife. But the incidents of his early life are buried in deep obscurity. It would seem that he practised his father's trade for a time and then abandoned it in order to devote himself exclusively to the cultivation of his own and of other people's intelligence. Before the age of forty Socrates must have already gained a high reputation for wisdom, for we find the beautiful, gifted, and aristocratic Alcibiades frequenting his society as a fitting preparation for filling the highest political offices. Some ten years later Aristophanes, in his comedy *The*

Clouds, already mentioned as a brilliant satire on the new culture, takes Socrates as a type of the whole Sophistic movement, an eager student of physical science, a dishonest atheist, and a corrupter of the youths who come to him for instruction.

Plato, writing long afterwards, puts into the mouth of Socrates an explicit repudiation of ever having been engaged in physical speculations, and in this respect he is fully borne out by the evidence of Xenophon, a fellow-disciple. We may take their word for it, without excluding the possibility that their master had gone into such studies enough to convince himself that for him at any rate they would be a waste of time. He was no less a genuine Athenian than Aristophanes; and except as a fashionable craze for a short period, physics never appealed to the Attic taste, nor did it owe at any time a single discovery to Attic genius. Like Protagoras, Socrates devoted himself to human interests, but unlike the great agnostic he shared the strong religious faith which nowhere had struck such deep roots as in Attic soil; and this faith stood high among the causes alienating him and his countrymen from the method of Hippias and Prodicus.

3. **Not a Sophist.**—On the strength of his reputation as a teacher, Socrates was popularly classed among the Sophists. His intimate friends, however, justly insisted on the fundamental difference separating him from them. It consisted, to begin with, in the circumstance that the Sophists took pay and that he did not. Quite apart from the direct evidence of Plato and Xenophon, who only knew him late in life, we may gather as much from the satire of Aristophanes on his poverty-stricken appearance—a fact absolutely inconsistent with his making a trade of tuition.

The profession of Sophist was indeed considered more lucrative than honourable; and an Athenian citizen may well have considered it beneath his dignity to barter wisdom for gold, especially in the case of one's own countrymen, whom it seemed a sort of natural duty to help with advice. Protagoras and the others were strangers, with something of the discredit attaching to foreign adventurers about them. Socrates never left his native city except on military duty, which he performed as a heavy-armed foot-soldier in three arduous campaigns, on one occasion saving the life of Alcibiades.

4. **Irony.**—Supposing, however, that the position of the paid teacher at Athens had been not less dignified than that of a salaried professor among ourselves, still it was one that Socrates would have scrupled to assume. It would have been dishonest on his part to take money for teaching, because by his account he had nothing to teach. Our authorities are not agreed as to what was meant by this profession of universal ignorance—the Socratic irony, as it is called. Plato gives it a strong religious colouring. According to his story, an ardent admirer of Socrates, one Chaerephon, asked the oracle at Delphi was there any man wiser than he. The Pythian prophetess answered that there was no man wiser. Much surprised at being singled out for such a distinction, and conscious of not in the least deserving it, Socrates went about seeking for some one wiser than himself, but found none even among those whose reputation stood highest. For their pretended wisdom invariably broke down under his cross-examination; while at the same time he could not convince them that they knew no more than he did. Then at last the meaning of the oracle became plain. Wisdom belongs to the gods alone; no man knows anything, and he is wisest who has come to the consciousness of his own ignorance.

One is sorry to question such a beautiful story; but, like the Athenian celebrities, it breaks down under cross-examination. Socrates could not have got so great a reputation as is here presupposed without some more positive achievement than a general confession of ignorance; and as depicted by Xenophon, in this respect a much more trustworthy informant than Plato, it is only about natural philosophy that he professes to know nothing or to hold that nothing can be known, the causes of physical phenomena being, in his opinion, a secret that the gods have kept to themselves. On the other hand, the whole range of human interests lies open to man, and among the rest to himself.

5. **The Dialectic Method.**—In limiting philosophy to the study of man, Socrates agrees with Protagoras, except that he approaches the subject from a religious rather than from an agnostic point of view. The distinctive originality of the Athenian thinker lies in his creation of a new method. Socrates figures in the history of philosophy before all things as the founder of logic, the first to attempt an organisation of reason as such. Reasoning of course is as old as language, in a way it is as old as conscious life; the behaviour of the most rudi-

mentary animals is guided by their experience of the past. And long before Socrates the Greeks had learned to distinguish this power from all the lower manifestations of consciousness, to look on it as constituting their own superiority to the barbarians—the secret also of one man's superiority to another in the State. Then came philosophy, and raised reason to a higher pinnacle still as the cause alike of physical order and of civil law, the ruling power of the world. As such, Anaxagoras had introduced it to Athens under the name of *Nous*—the one Greek word still known to the most ignorant sporting man among ourselves.

Another Greek word for reason, the one used by Heracleitus, is *logos*, whence comes our word logic, which means the science of reasoning, the analysis of its operations, the systematic exposition of the process by which conception, judgment, and inference, are successfully carried on. Socrates did not create the science of logic—that was an achievement reserved for his successor, Aristotle—but without his pioneer work it could not have been created. How much he actually did we cannot tell with certainty, for Xenophon, to whom our most trustworthy information is due, had but a feeble hold on pure theory, and Plato's dramatic presentation of the old master

gives such an immense extension to his method that the original nucleus cannot be isolated from subsequent accretions.

6. **Definition.**—We know on the authority of Aristotle, confirmed by the detailed statements of Xenophon, that Socrates first introduced the methods of definition and induction. That is, he took some abstract term, by preference the name of a virtue or vice, such as Courage or Justice, Cowardice or Injustice, and by comparing together a number of concrete instances where those qualities were exhibited, sought to arrive at a general notion of what the word meant, of what we now call its connotation. According to him, such a procedure was necessary in order that discussions on subjects of general interest might be carried on in a friendly and profitable manner. And not only were definitions necessary in order that people might know what they were talking about, but the definitions themselves were to be arrived at as the result of a search jointly undertaken by the whole company, everybody present helping to the best of his ability in the hunt after truth. Socrates in fact applied the democratic tradition of Athens to scientific inquiry, not speaking with authority as the Sophists, but

as professing to know no more than any one else; more concerned to ask questions than to answer them; always on the look-out for new facts and new ideas. His method reflected both the deliberations of the sovereign Assembly and the cross-examination to which defendants could subject their prosecutors in the popular law-courts.

Of course Athens, even more than other Greek cities, abounded in persons having a good conceit of themselves; and pretenders to universal knowledge found a merciless critic in the poorly-dressed old man with the thick lips and flat, turned-up nose who, under the appearance of reverence for their superior wisdom and an insatiable thirst for information, by a series of searching questions speedily involved the pontifical charlatan in a mesh of hopeless self-contradiction. Such scenes no doubt suggested to Plato his imposing picture of Socrates as a divinely-commissioned prophet going about to convince the world of universal and hopeless ignorance, as prophets of another school go about to convince it of universal depravity. But the picture as it stands is not historical; and the real prophet had a message of reasoned truth rather than of reasoned nescience to deliver.

7. Division. — More important even than Definition to clear thinking is the logical process of Division—the distribution of every subject discussed under a number of distinct headings. Descartes, the founder of modern French philosophy, mentions the plan of breaking up difficulties into the greatest possible number of parts as a first step to discovering their solution; and the same method was practised by Socrates two thousand years before him. If, for instance, he were discussing the comparative claims of two rival statesmen to the name of a good citizen he would bring down the question to a specific estimate of their respective services in the various departments of political activity. A good citizen increases the resources of the State, defeats the enemy in war, wins allies by diplomacy, appeases intestine discords by his eloquence.

8. Reasoning. — Definition and division are spoken of in logic as processes subsidiary to Inference—that is the discovery of new truths as necessary consequences of the truths we already know. Socrates was fully alive to this characteristic property of reasoning, and illustrated it in his conversations by starting from principles about which he and his interlocutor were agreed.

Unfortunately Xenophon, on account of his very narrow range of interests, does not quote examples enough to show how Socrates habitually worked out his conclusions. But he gives us the valuable information that no man whom he ever knew was so successful in gaining the assent of his hearers—a fact quite inconsistent with Plato's account of his hero as an exasperating personage, reducing every one to shame if not to confession by his dialectical skill.

9. **Final Causes.** — As it happens, the most celebrated instance of Socratic reasoning is one that modern science has shown to be much less convincing than used to be imagined. This is the well-known Theistic argument from design. As the structure of the human body exhibits an adaptation of means to ends such as we find in the works of skilful artificers, the existence of a powerful, intelligent, and benevolent Being is assumed as necessary to explain its origin. Whatever the argument may be worth, the credit of having discovered it clearly belongs to Socrates, for Anaxagoras, who comes nearest to him as a Theistic philosopher, conceived his *Nous* as working by mechanical impulse, not by design. And if there is any truth in the story of the oracle

declaring him to be the wisest of men, we may suppose that it was due to the impression made on the Delphic authorities by his fame as the contributor of a new reason for believing in the gods at a time when philosophers in general passed for being atheists. As to the Socratic profession of ignorance, we are now in a better position to appreciate its value. It is a paradoxical way of saying that the logician as such need know nothing that commonly passes for knowledge. By exposing the flaws in other people's theories he may prove that they are as ignorant as he is himself. Or again, by unfolding the implications of the facts supplied to him by other people, while securing their assent to every step in the chain of inference, he may make it seem as if the result obtained did as much credit to their wisdom as to his own. This is the method constantly followed by the Platonic Socrates, who in this respect may reproduce the spirit of the master more faithfully than Xenophon's photographic illustrations.

10. **Socrates as a Moral Reformer.** — While Socrates interests us chiefly as the creator of logical method, the philosopher himself only valued that method as an instrument of moral

reformation. As an Athenian citizen he took a profound personal interest in the good government of his country; and this patriotic motive was alone sufficient to distinguish him from the Sophists, who as paid teachers and foreigners could not be actuated by the same absorbing passion for the public good. At the same time it is clear that their comparative detachment and wide range of culture gave their ethical ideas a reach, an originality, and an emancipating power that his did not possess. The Humanism of Protagoras was pregnant with hopes of a higher civilisation than Greece had reached. The Naturalism of Hippias and Prodicus embodied a reaction against perverted appetites from which Greece in less civilised ages had been free.

11. **Utilitarianism.**—In accordance with the systematising bent of his genius, Socrates seems to have sought for a single principle in ethics, and to have found it provisionally in the idea of utility; that is to say he introduced the method of estimating the morality of actions neither by public opinion nor by individual taste, but by their calculable consequences. We must not suppose, however, that his attempts in this direc-

tion amounted to an anticipation of utilitarianism in the modern sense.

As reported by Xenophon, he never commits himself to the assertion that pleasure and the absence of pain are the only desirable things. Nor, assuming that we have discovered in what utility consists—whether pleasurableness or anything else — does Socrates ever make it clear whether the conduct of the individual is to be determined by regard for his own advantage, or for the advantage of the community to which he belongs, or for that of the whole human race. That these respective claims might, apparently at least, collide was a difficulty first seriously discussed in all its bearings by Plato, who only hoped to solve it by revolutionising public opinion, society, and religion. Socrates habitually appeals to self-interest, as if it were the only available motive; but he seems at the same time to be persuaded that the happiness of the citizen is in the long run identified with the happiness of the State. That, in fact, was not his question, but rather the question how an art of social life could be constructed comparable for systematic completeness to the industrial arts of which a city like Athens offered such multifarious examples.

12. The Lessons of Town Life.—Aristophanes could not see the soul of Socrates, but he has taken a snapshot of the philosopher as he appeared to the man in the street, the accuracy of which is vouched for by Plato, 'stalking about like a pelican and rolling his eyes.' Nothing escaped those curious eyes, as nothing escaped Mr. Gladstone's, and their inquisitiveness found a rich harvest in a city where every calling was taught and practised with complete publicity. Now what struck Socrates chiefly was the high value set on expert attainments, and the ready obedience given to professional trainers wherever a special technique had come to be recognised, as in the army and navy, the theatre, the artist's studio, or the gymnasium, compared with the haphazard methods of politics, of the higher education, of social intimacies, of pleasure-seeking among the leisured classes. That any one should follow for his personal satisfaction a line of conduct which would not be tolerated for a day in the hired occupants of a responsible office, seemed to the philosopher a revolting paradox. Some may call this a *bourgeois* or Philistine morality. But what makes those names terms of reproach is their association with a slavish deference to custom and tradition. Socratic morality, by reducing

life to a fine art, discards convention and opens possibilities of endless improvement.

13. **Virtue as Knowledge.**—Greek philosophy delighted in paradoxes, and Socrates was credited with two such: first, the paradox of ignorance, which as we saw expressed in a picturesque way the discovery of fact by talking things over methodically,—the evolution by logical processes of the unknown into the known; and secondly, the paradox, that virtue is identical with knowledge, so that he who has the right theory of conduct necessarily does what is right. Every one, said Socrates, does what he thinks is for his good; if he does wrong that only proves that he is mistaken in his belief and ought to be taught better. Such an idea is closely connected with the interpretation of morality as an art: the artist has in fact been defined as one who does his best. And it might be said that the man who scamps his work has mistaken beliefs about the good of making money or the good of saving time. The question ends by becoming a verbal one. If my friend tells me that he does what he knows is bad for him, and I observe that, if he really knew that, he would not do it, we are evidently not using the word 'know' in the same sense. Or to

put it somewhat differently, the Socratic philosophy which began as ultra-intellectualism ends in what would now be called ultra-pragmatism. Belief does not lead to practice; it is practice and nothing else.

14. **The Divine Voice.**—Socrates did not succeed in reducing his own life to a work of art capable of being explained and justified as the expression of right theory in right practice. A place had to be left for the free play of unaccountable instincts or intuitions warning him without a reason that certain actions would have bad results. He interpreted these inward monitions as a divine voice accompanying him through life. By a misinterpretation which goes back to his own time this voice has often been described as a dæmon or personal spirit. More recently it has been identified with conscience. But this view is inconsistent with the circumstance, mentioned by Plato, that the monitor always intervened to forbid, never to give a positive command. Conscience both forbids and commands; while in each instance its promptings can be referred to the known laws of moral obligation.

15. **The Hero as a Philosopher.**—With Socrates

himself to know the right and to do it were the same thing, and no doubt it was from a conviction that what was possible to him was equally possible to all men that he identified virtue with knowledge. For the unflinching performance of duty at all costs he is, so far as our information goes, without an equal in the ancient world. His services as a soldier in the field have been already mentioned. His conduct as a citizen at home is marked by still greater fortitude. It was his custom—at the bidding as he declared of the divine monitor—to abstain from all political activity. But there came a moment when a civic duty, accidentally imposed on the philosopher, showed of what mettle he was made. Athens had won her last great victory over a Peloponnesian fleet at Arginusæ. But to her people the victory became an occasion for mourning and indignation, because through the neglect, as was alleged, of the admirals a number of sailors had been left to perish in the waves, and what seemed still worse, the bodies of the dead were not picked up and brought home for burial. It was, therefore, resolved that the admirals who returned home, six in number, should be tried on this charge. So far no objection could be taken to the proceedings. The case was altered when

the Senate accepted a resolution decreeing that the guilt or innocence of the accused parties should be submitted to a direct vote of the whole people instead of to a regular sworn jury, that they should not be heard in their own defence, and that their cases should be decided in a batch instead of being submitted one by one to the popular judgment, as was prescribed by law. At first the Prytanes, a sort of municipal Board whose business it was to preside over the deliberations of the Sovereign Assembly, refused to commit the illegality of putting the question to the vote, but eventually all, with a single exception, yielded to the clamour of the multitude. That solitary representative of law and justice was Socrates, whom the chances of the lot had enrolled among the Prytanes of that day. His protest could not be overcome by threats of imprisonment and death, but being eventually passed over, it was powerless to save the unfortunate victors of Arginusæ from condemnation and execution.

Two years after these events the democracy that had so abused its power was abolished by a foreign conqueror, and an oligarchy of thirty members imposed on Athens. These men soon inaugurated a reign of terror, killing and plunder-

ing to their heart's content. Within the city one voice alone was raised in fearless criticism of their insane violence, this time also the voice of Socrates. Critias, the leader of the terrorists, had been his pupil and was content to let the old philosopher off with a private warning to hold his tongue.

Socrates also braved an insidious attempt of the thirty to make him an accomplice in their crimes. A certain Leon of Salamis, whose only offence was his wealth, had been marked out by them for proscription. Five citizens, of whom Socrates was one, received orders to arrest this man and bring him over to be executed. The other four went on the disgraceful errand; he remained at home.

16. **Trial and Death of Socrates.**—It was reserved for the restored democracy to commit a crime from which even the cruel and unscrupulous oligarchs had recoiled. In the year 399 B.C. Socrates was prosecuted on a capital charge before the popular tribunal by Anytus, a democratic politician, Lycon, a public speaker, and Meletus, a poet. They accused him of denying the gods whom the State acknowledged, of introducing new gods whom the State did not acknowledge, and of being a corrupter of youth. In

short, they represented the greatest and purest religious teacher Greece had ever seen of being an immoral and superstitious atheist.

Athens, as has already been mentioned, was distinguished above all other Greek cities for intolerant bigotry. So far the victims of persecution had been philosophers whose ideas were irreconcilable with the current mythology, such as Anaxagoras and Protagoras, or who openly criticised it, such as Diagoras of Melos. But what makes the habit of punishing people for their opinions so peculiarly poisonous is that sooner or later it victimises originality of every kind, even the originality that finds new arguments for old beliefs. Socrates incurred the suspicion of atheism simply because he met the atheists on their own ground, encountering reason with reason, and because he betrayed a thorough acquaintance with the theories he set himself to refute. To describe his divinely sent warnings as a new-fangled religion was of course a misconception that a few words of explanation would dispel.

A pamphleteer who renewed the attack on Socrates some years after his death supported the charge of corrupting youth by the examples of Alcibiades and Critias. Both had been his pupils, and both had turned out badly; but as Xenophon

truly observes, whatever influence Socrates exercised over them was used to keep them straight, not to lead them astray.

Plato's account of his master's trial and death is a historical romance; but the main facts may be taken as faithfully related. The court which sat in judgment on Socrates consisted of 501 citizens chosen by lot. It seems to have made a bad impression on many of these persons that the old philosopher appealed to their reason instead of humbly throwing himself on their mercy, which in Xenophon's opinion would have insured his acquittal. Condemned by a small majority, and invited to propose a lighter penalty than the capital sentence demanded by his accuser, Socrates began by suggesting that maintenance at the public expense in the Prytaneum would be the proper recompense for the services he had rendered to the State. Then, waiving this claim as impracticable, he offered to pay a fine of thirty minae (about £122), as his friends would be willing to make up that much money among them. On a second vote the fearless old man was condemned to death, eighty of those who had pronounced him innocent now going over to the side of the majority.

It so happened that the condemnation fell at a

time when, owing to the absence of a sacred mission sent to Delos, no capital sentence could be carried out at Athens. This gave a respite of thirty days to Socrates, who, had he chosen, might have profited by the delay to make his escape from prison. Everything had in fact been arranged for the purpose by his friends, but he refused to avail himself of their offers, on the ground that it would have involved disobedience to the laws. Accordingly on the expiration of the fatal term, after a last conversation with his followers, Socrates cheerfully met death in the way humanely prescribed at Athens, by swallowing a draught of hemlock.

We owe it to the method and the example of this heroic sage, first, that philosophy has ever since centred in the study of mind rather than in the study of matter; and also that it has been understood to demand, so far as human frailty permits, a realisation in its teachers' lives of the ideal that their moral theories set up. Hence the later schools of Greek philosophy, while more largely indebted to the Ionian cosmologists and to the Sophists than to Socrates for their speculative principles, exhibit in the character and attitude of their founders and chief representatives the unmistakable impress of his commanding personality.

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THE

GREEK PHILOSOPHERS

VOL I.

THE

GREEK PHILOSOPHERS

BY

ALFRED WILLIAM BENN

Εὑρηκέναι μὲν οὖν τινὰς τῶν ἀρχαίων καὶ μακαρίων φιλοσόφων τὸ ἀληθὲς δεῖ νομίζειν· τίνες δὲ οἱ τυχόντες μάλιστα καὶ πῶς ἂν καὶ ἡμῖν σύνεσις περὶ τούτων γένοιτο ἐπισκέψασθαι προσήκει

PLOTINUS

Quamquam ab his philosophiam et omnes ingenuas disciplinas habemus : sed tamen est aliquid quod nobis non liceat, liceat illis

CICERO

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

LONDON
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, & CO., 1 PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1882

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AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

TO

J. B. B.

PREFACE.

A CONSIDERABLE portion of the present work, comprising the whole of the first volume and the first two chapters of the second, is reprinted with corrections and additions from the *Westminster Review*. The last chapter of the second volume has already appeared under a slightly different title in *Mind* for January and April 1882. The chapters entitled, 'The Sceptics and Eclectics,' 'The Religious Revival,' and 'The Spiritualism of Plotinus,' are now published for the first time.

The subject of Greek philosophy is so vast that, in England at least, it has become customary to deal with it in detached portions rather than as a connected whole. This method has its advantages, but it has also its drawbacks. The critic who singles out some one thinker for special study is apt to exaggerate the importance of his hero and to credit him with the origination of principles which were really borrowed from his predecessors. Moreover, the appearance of a new idea can only be made intelligible by tracing the previous tendencies which it either continues, combines, or contradicts. In a word, the history of philosophy has itself a philosophy which requires that we should go beyond particular phenomena and view them as variously related parts of a single system.

The history of Greek philosophy, whether conceived in this comprehensive sense or as an erudite investigation into matters of detail, is a province which the Germans have made peculiarly their own; and, among German scholars, Dr. Zeller is the one who has treated it with most success. My obligations to his great work are sufficiently shown by the copious references to it which occur throughout the following pages. It is in those instances—and they are, unfortunately, very numerous – where our knowledge of particular philosophers and of their opinions rests on fragmentary or second-hand information, that I have found his assistance most valuable. This has especially been the case with reference to the pre-Socratic schools, the minor successors of Socrates, the earlier Stoics, the Sceptics, and the later Pythagoreans. I must, however, guard against the supposition that my work is, in any respect, a popularisation or abridgment of Zeller's. To popularise Zeller would, indeed, be an impertinence, for nothing can be more luminous and interesting than his style and general mode of exposition. Nor am I playing the part of a finder to a large telescope; for my point of view by no means coincides with that of the learned German historian. Thus, while my limits have obliged me to be content with a very summary treatment of many topics which he has discussed at length, there are others, and those, in my opinion, not the least important, to which he has given less space than will be found allotted to them here. On several questions, also, I have ventured to controvert his opinions, notably with reference to the Sophists, Socrates, Aristotle, and Plotinus. My general way of looking at the Greeks and their philosophy also differs from his. And the reasons which have led me to follow an independent course in this respect involve consider-

ations of such interest and importance, that I shall take the liberty of specifying them in some detail.

Stated briefly, Zeller's theory of ancient thought is that the Greeks originally lived in harmony with Nature; that the bond was broken by philosophy and particularly by the philosophy of Socrates; that the discord imperfectly overcome by Plato and Aristotle revealed itself once more in the unreconciled, self-concentrated subjectivity of the later schools; that this hopeless estrangement, after reaching its climax in the mysticism of the Neo-Platonists, led to the complete collapse of independent speculation; and that the creation of a new consciousness by the advent of Christianity and of the Germanic races was necessary in order to the successful resumption of scientific enquiry. Zeller was formerly a Hegelian, and it seems to me that he still retains far too much of the Hegelian formalism in his historical constructions. The well-worked antithesis between object and subject, even after being revised in a positivist sense, is totally inadequate to the burden laid on it by this theory; and if we want really to understand the causes which first hampered, then arrested, and finally paralysed Greek philosophy, we must seek for them in a more concrete order of considerations. Zeller, with perfect justice, attributes the failure of Plato and Aristotle to their defective observation of Nature and their habit of regarding the logical combinations of ideas derived from the common use of words as an adequate representative of the relations obtaining among things in themselves. But it seems an extremely strained and artificial explanation to say that their shortcomings in this respect were due to a confusion of the objective and the subjective, consequent on the imperfect separation of the Greek mind from Nature—a confusion, it is

added, which only the advent of a new religion and a new race could overcome.[1] It is unfair to make Hellenism as a whole responsible for fallacies which might easily be paralleled in the works of modern metaphysicians; and the unfairness will become still more evident when we remember that, after enjoying the benefit of Christianity and Germanism for a thousand years, the modern world had still to take its first lessons in patience of observation, in accuracy of reasoning, and in sobriety of expression from such men as Thucydides and Hippocrates, Polybius, Archimêdes and Hipparchus. Even had the Greeks as a nation been less keen to distinguish between illusion and reality than their successors up to the sixteenth century—a supposition notoriously the reverse of true—it would still have to be explained why Plato and Aristotle, with their prodigious intellects, went much further astray than their predecessors in the study of Nature. And this Zeller's method does not explain at all.

Again, I think that Zeller quite misconceives the relation between Greek philosophy and Greek life when he attributes the intellectual decline of the post-Aristotelian period, in part at least, to the simultaneous ruin of public spirit and political independence. The degeneracy of poetry and art, of eloquence and history, may perhaps be accounted for in this way, but not the relaxation of philosophical activity. On the contrary, the disappearance of political interests was of all conditions the most favourable to speculation, as witness the Ionians, Democritus, and Aristotle. Had the independence and power of the great city-republics been prolonged much further, it is probable—as the example of the Sophists and Socrates seems to show—that philosophy would have become

[1] *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, III., a, pp. 5 f.

still more absorbingly moral and practical than it actually became in the Stoic, Epicurean, and Sceptical schools. And theoretical studies did, in fact, receive a great impulse from the Macedonian conquest, a large fund of intellectual energy being diverted from public affairs to the pursuit of knowledge, only it took the direction of positive science rather than of general speculation.[1]

The cause which first arrested and finally destroyed the free movement of Greek thought was not any intrinsic limitation or corruption of the Greek genius, but the ever-increasing preponderance of two interests, both tending, although in different ways and different degrees, to strengthen the principle of authority and to enfeeble the principle of reason. One was the theological interest, the other was the scholastic interest. The former was the more conspicuous and the more mischievous of the two. From the persecution of Anaxagoras to the prohibition of philosophical teaching by Justinian, we may trace the rise and spread of a reaction towards superstition, sometimes advancing and sometimes receding, but, on the whole, gaining ground from age to age, until from the noontide splendour of Pericles we pass to that long night which stretches in almost impenetrable darkness down to the red and stormy daybreak of the Crusades. And it was a reaction which extended through all classes, including the philosophers themselves. It seems to me that where the Athenian school, from Socrates on, fall short of their predecessors, as in some points they unquestionably do, their inferiority is largely due to this cause. Its influence is very perceptible in weakening the speculative energies of those

[1] If I remember rightly, Polybius makes the same observation, but I cannot recall the exact reference.

who stand at the greatest distance from the popular beliefs. It was because dislike for theology occupied so large a place in the thoughts of Epicurus and his disciples, that they valued science only as a refutation of its teaching, instead of regarding it simply as an obstacle to be removed from the path of enquiry. More than this; they became infected with the spirit of that against which they fought, and their absolute indifference to truth was the shadow which it cast on their minds.

The theological interest and the scholastic interest, though not necessarily associated, have, as already observed, a point of contact in their common exaltation of authority. Thus, for our present purpose they may be classified under the more general notion of traditionalism. By this term I understand a disposition to accept as true opinions received either by the mass of mankind or by the best accredited teachers, and to throw these opinions into a form adapted for easy transmission to others. In this sense, traditionalism is Janus-faced, looking on one side to the past and on the other to the future. Now philosophy could only gain general acceptance by becoming a tradition. For a long time the Greek thinkers busied themselves almost exclusively with the discovery of truth, remaining comparatively indifferent to its diffusion. As Plato says, they went their own way without caring whether they took us along with them or not.[1] And it was at this period that the most valuable speculative ideas were first originated. At last a strong desire arose among the higher classes to profit by the results of the new learning, and a class of men came into existence whose profession was to gratify this desire. But the Sophists, as they were called,

[1] *Sophist*, 243, A.

soon found that lessons in the art of life were more highly appreciated and more liberally rewarded than lessons in the constitution of Nature. Accordingly, with the facile ingenuity of Greeks, they set to work proving, first that Nature could not be known, and finally that there was no such thing as Nature at all. The real philosophers were driven to secure their position by a change of front. They became teachers themselves, disguising their lessons, however, under the form of a search after truth undertaken conjointly with their friends, who, of course, were not expected to pay for the privilege of giving their assistance, and giving it for so admirable a purpose. In this co-operative system, the person who led the conversation was particularly careful to show that his conclusions followed directly from the admissions of his interlocutors, being, so to speak, latent in their minds, and only needing a little obstetric assistance on his part to bring them into the light of day. And the better to rivet their attention, he chose for the subject of discussion questions of human interest, or else, when the conversation turned to physical phenomena, he led the way towards a teleological or aesthetical interpretation of their meaning.

Thus, where Zeller says that the Greek philosophers confounded the objective with the subjective because they were still imperfectly separated from Nature, we seem to have come on a less ambitious but more intelligible explanation of the facts, and one capable of being stated with as much generality as his. Not only among the Greeks but everywhere, culture is more or less antagonistic to originality, and the diffusion to the enlargement of knowledge. Thought is like water ; when spread over a wider surface it is apt to become stagnant and shallow. When ideas could only live on the condition of

being communicated to a large circle of listeners, they were necessarily adapted to the taste and lowered to the comprehension of relatively vulgar minds. And not only so, but the habit of taking their opinions and prejudices as the starting-point of every enquiry frequently led to the investment of those opinions and prejudices with the formal sanction of a philosophical demonstration. It was held that education consisted less in the acquisition of new truth than in the elevation to clearer consciousness of truths which had all along been dimly perceived.

To the criticism and systematisation of common language and common opinion succeeded the more laborious criticism and systematisation of philosophical theories. Such an enormous amount of labour was demanded for the task of working up the materials amassed by Greek thought during the period of its creative originality, and accommodating them to the popular belief, that not much could be done in the way of adding to their extent. Nor was this all. Among the most valuable ideas of the earlier thinkers were those which stood in most striking opposition to the evidence of the senses. As such they were excluded from the system which had for its object the reorganisation of philosophy on the basis of general consent. Thus not only did thought tend to become stationary, but it even abandoned some of the ground which had been formerly won.

Not that the vitality of Hellenic reason gave way simultaneously at every point. The same independent spirit, the same imaginative vigour which had carried physical speculation to such splendid conquests during the first two centuries of its existence were manifested with equal effect when the energies previously devoted to Nature as a whole concentrated

themselves on the study of conduct and belief. It was thus that Socrates could claim the whole field of human life for scientific treatment, and create the method by which it has ever since been most successfully studied. It was thus that Plato could analyse and ideally reconstruct all practices, institutions, and beliefs. It was thus that Aristotle, while definitely arresting the progress of research, could still complete the method and create the language through which the results of new research have been established, recognised, and communicated ever since. It was thus that the Stoics advanced from paradox to paradox until they succeeded in co-ordinating morality for all time by reference to the three fundamental ideas of personal conscience, individual obligation, and universal humanity. And not only were dialectics and ethics at first animated by the same enterprising spirit as speculative physics, but their very existence as recognised studies must be ascribed to its decay, to the revolution through which philosophy, from being purely theoretical, became social and didactic. While in some directions thought was made stationary and even retrogressive by the very process of its diffusion, in other directions this diffusion was the cause of its more complete development. Finally, ethics and logic were reduced to a scholastic routine, and progress continued to be made only in the positive sciences, until, here also, it was brought to an end by the triumph of superstition and barbarism combined.

If the cessation of speculative activity among the Greeks needs to be accounted for by something more definite than phrases about the objective and the subjective, so also does its resumption among the nations of modern Europe. This may be explained by two different circumstances—the disap-

pearance of the obstacles which had long opposed themselves to the free exercise of reason, and the stimulus given to enquiry by the Copernican astronomy. After spreading over the whole basin of the Mediterranean, Hellenic culture had next to repair the ravages of the barbarians, and, chiefly under the form of Christianity, to make itself accepted by the new nationalities which had risen on the ruins of the Roman empire. So arduous a task was sufficient to engross, during many centuries, the entire intellectual energies of Western Europe. At last the extreme limits of diffusion were provisionally reached, and thought once more became available for the discovery of new truth. Simultaneously with this consummation, the great supernaturalist reaction, having also reached its extreme limits, had so far subsided, that Nature could once more be studied on scientific principles, with less freedom, indeed, than in old Ionia, but still with tolerable security against the vengeance of interested or fanatical opponents. And at the very same conjuncture it was shown by the accumulated observations of many ages that the conception of the universe on which the accepted philosophy rested must be replaced by one of a directly opposite description. I must confess that in this vast revolution the relation between the objective and the subjective, as reconstituted by Christianity and the Germanic genius, does not seem to me to have played a very prominent part.

If Zeller's semi-Hegelian theory of history does scant justice to the variety and complexity of causes determining the evolution of philosophy, it also draws away attention from the ultimate elements, the matter, in an Aristotelian sense, of which that evolution consists. By this I mean the development of particular ideas as distinguished from the

systems into which they enter as component parts. Often the formation of a system depends on an accidental combination of circumstances, and therefore cannot be brought under any particular law of progress, while the ideas out of which it is constructed exhibit a perfectly regular advance on the form under which they last appeared. Others, again, are characterised by a remarkable fixity which enables them to persist unchanged through the most varied combinations and the most protracted intervals of time. But when each system is regarded as, so to speak, an organic individual, the complete and harmonious expression of some one phase of thought, and the entire series of systems as succeeding one another in strict logical order according to some simple law of evolution, there will be a certain tendency to regard the particular elements of each as determined by the character of the whole to which they belong, rather than by their intrinsic nature and antecedent history. And I think it is owing to this limitation of view that Zeller has not illustrated, so fully as could be desired, the subtler references by which the different schools of philosophy are connected with one another and also with the literature of their own and other times.

An interesting example of the process on which I have just touched is offered by the reappearance and further elaboration of some most important Greek ideas in modern philosophy. In the concluding chapter of this work I have attempted to indicate the chief lines along which such a transmission may be traced. The subject is one which has hitherto been unduly neglected. No critic would be justified in describing the speculative movement of the nineteenth century without constant reference to the metaphysicians and

moralists of the two preceding centuries. Yet the dependence of those thinkers on the schools of antiquity is hardly less intimate than our dependence on Spinoza and Hume. Nevertheless, in no work that I am acquainted with has this circumstance been used to elucidate the course pursued by modern thought; indeed, I may say that the persistence of Hellenic ideas down to the most recent times has not been fully recognised by any scholar except Prof. Teichmüller, who has particularly devoted his attention to the history of conceptions as distinguished from the history of systems.

The introduction of Teichmüller's name affords me an opportunity for mentioning that my attention was not directed to his brilliant researches into various questions connected with Greek philosophy, and more particularly with the systems of Plato and Aristotle, until it was too late for me to profit by them in the present work. I allude more particularly to his *Studien zur Geschichte der Begriffe* (Berlin, 1874), and to his recently published *Literarische Fehden im vierten Jahrhundert vor Chr.* (Breslau, 1881). The chief points of the former work are, that Plato was really a pantheist or monist, not, as is commonly believed and as I have myself taken for granted, a dualist; that, as a consequence of the suppression of individuality which characterises his system, he did not really accept or teach the doctrine of personal immortality, although he wished that the mass of the people should believe it; that Plato no more attributed a transcendent existence to his ideas than did Aristotle to his substantial forms; and that in putting an opposite interpretation on his old master's theory, Aristotle is guilty of gross misrepresentation. The most important point of the *Literarische Fehden* is that Aristotle published his *Ethics*

while Plato was still alive and engaged in the composition of his *Laws*, and that certain passages in the latter work, of which one relates to free-will and the other to the unity of virtue (861, A ff. and 962 ff.) were intended as a reply to Aristotle's well-known criticisms on the Platonic theory of ethics.

I have been necessarily brief in my statement of Teichmüller's theses; and to judge of them apart from the facts and arguments by which they are supported in the two very interesting volumes above named would be in the highest degree unfair. I feel bound, however, to mention the chief reasons which make me hesitate to accept his conclusions. It seems to me, then, that although Plato was moving in the direction of pantheism—as I have myself pointed out in more than one passage of this work—he never actually reached it. For (i.) he does not, like Plotinus, attempt to deduce his material from his ideal principle, but only blends without reconciling them in the world of sensible experience. (ii.) In opposing the perishable nature of the individual (or rather the particular) to the eternal nature of the universal, he is going on the facts of experience rather than on any necessary opposition between the two, and on experience of material or sensible objects rather than of immaterial souls; while, even as regards material objects, the heavenly bodies, to which he attributes everlasting duration, constitute such a sweeping exception to his rule as entirely to destroy its applicability. (iii.) Plato's multiplied and elaborate arguments for the immortality of the soul would be superfluous were his only object to prove that the soul, like everything else, contains an eternal element. (iv.) The Pythagorean theory that the soul is a harmony, which Plato rejects, would

have been perfectly compatible with the ideal and impersonal immortality which Teichmüller supposes him to have taught; for while the particular harmony perishes, the general laws of harmony remain. (v.) Teichmüller does not dispose satisfactorily of Plato's crowning argument that the idea of life is as inseparable from the soul as heat from fire or cold from snow. He says (*op. cit.*, p. 134) that, on this principle, the individual soul may still perish, just as particular portions of fire are extinguished and particular portions of snow are melted. Yes, but portions of fire do not grow cold, nor portions of snow hot, which and which alone would offer an analogy to the extinction of a soul.

I agree, however, with Teichmüller that the doctrines of reminiscence and metempsychosis have a purely mythical significance, and I should have expressed my views on the subject with more definiteness and decision had I known that his authority might be quoted in their support. I think that Plato was in a transition state from the Oriental to what afterwards became the Christian theory of retribution. In the one he found an allegorical illustration of his metaphysics, in the other a very serious sanction for his ethics. He felt their incompatibility, but was not prepared to undertake such a complete reconstruction of his system as would have been necessitated by altogether denying the pre-existence of the soul. Of such vacillation Plato's later Dialogues offer, I think, sufficient evidence. For example, the Matter of the *Timaeus* seems to be a revised version of the Other or principle of division and change, which has already figured as a pure idea, in which capacity it must necessarily be opposed to matter. At the same time, I must observe that, from my point of view, it is enough if Plato inculcated the doctrine of a future life as

an important element of his religious system. And that he did so inculcate it Teichmüller fully admits.[1]

With regard to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I think Teichmüller has proved this much, that it was written before Aristotle had read the *Laws* or knew of its existence. But this does not prove that he wrote it during Plato's lifetime, since the *Laws* was not published until after Plato's death, possibly not until several years after. And, published or not, Aristotle may very well have remained ignorant of its existence until his return to Athens, which, according to the tradition, took place about 336 B.C. Teichmüller does, indeed, suppose that Aristotle spent some time in Athens between his flight from Mitylênê and his engagement as tutor to Alexander (*Literarische Fehden*, p. 261). But this theory, besides its purely conjectural character, would still allow the possibility of Aristotle's having remained unacquainted with the *Laws* up to the age of forty. And it is obvious that the passages which Teichmüller interprets as replies to Aristotle's criticisms admit of more than one alternative explanation. They may have originated in doubts and difficulties which spontaneously suggested themselves to Plato in the course of his independent reflections; or, granting that there is a polemic reference, it may have been provoked by some other critic, or by the spoken criticisms of Aristotle himself. For the supposition that Aristotle wrote his *Ethics* at the early age of thirty-two or thirty-three seems to me so improbable that we should not accept it except under pressure of the strongest evidence. That a work of such matured thought and observation should have been produced by so young a man is, so far as I know, a phenomenon unparalleled in the

[1] See especially the interesting note on the subject in his recent work, *Die wirkliche und die scheinbare Welt*, Vorrede, pp. x. ff.

history of literature. And to this we must add the further circumstance that the Greek mind was not particularly remarkable for precocity in any field except war and statesmanship. We do, indeed, find instances of comparatively juvenile authorship, but none, I believe, of a Greek writer, whether poet, historian, or philosopher, who reached the full maturity of his powers before a considerably advanced period of middle age. That the *Ethics* is very imperfect I fully admit, and have expressly maintained against its numerous admirers in the course of this work. But, although imperfect, it is not crude. It contains as good a discussion of the subject undertaken as Aristotle was ever capable of giving, and its limitations are not those of an unripe intellect, but of an intellect at all times comparatively unsuited for the treatment of practical problems, and narrowed still further by the requirements of an elaborate speculative system. Now to work out this system must have demanded considerably more labour and independent thought than one can suppose even an Aristotle to have found time for before thirty-three; while the experience of life shown in the *Ethics* is such as study, so far from supplying, would, on the contrary, have delayed. Moreover, the *Rhetoric*, which was confessedly written before the *Ethics*, exhibits the same qualities in about an equal degree, and therefore, on Teichmüller's theory, testifies to a still more extraordinary precocity. And there is the further circumstance that while Aristotle is known to have begun his public career as a teacher of rhetoric, his earliest productions seem to have been of a rather diffuse and declamatory character, quite opposed to the severe concision which marks the style both of the *Rhetoric* and of the *Ethics*. In addition to these general considerations, one may mention that in a

well-known passage of the *Ethics*, referring to a question of logical method (I., iv.), Plato is spoken of in the imperfect tense, which would seem to imply that he was no longer living when it was written. Speaking from memory, I should even be inclined to doubt whether the mention of a living writer by name at all is consistent with Aristotle's standard of literary etiquette.

These are difficulties which Teichmüller has, no doubt, fully weighed and put aside as not sufficiently strong to invalidate his conclusions. I have stated them in order to show that enough can be said for the old view to justify the republication of what was written on the assumption of its unquestionable truth. Moreover, researches conducted with so much skill and learning as those of Teichmüller demand some public acknowledgment in a work like the present, even when the results are such that the writer cannot see his way to accepting them as satisfactorily made out. There are many English scholars more competent than I am to discuss the whole question at issue. Perhaps these lines may induce some of them to give it the attention which it merits, but which, in England at least, it does not seem to have as yet received.

My obligations to other writers have been acknowledged throughout this work, so far as I was conscious of them, and so far as they could be defined by reference to specific points. I take the present opportunity for mentioning in a more general way the valuable assistance which I have derived from Schwegler's *Geschichte der Griechischen Philosophie*, Lange's *Geschichte des Materialismus*, and Dühring's *Geschichte der Philosophie*. The parallel between Socrates, Giordano Bruno, and Spinoza was probably suggested to me

by Dühring, as also were some points in my characterisation of Aristotle. As my view of the position occupied by Lucretius with respect to religion and philosophy differs in many important points from that of Prof. Sellar, it is the more incumbent on me to state that, but for a perusal of Prof. Sellar's eloquent and sympathetic chapters on the great Epicurean poet, my own estimate of his genius would certainly not have been written in its present form and would probably not have been written at all.

On the whole, I am afraid that my acquaintance with the modern literature of the subject will be found rather limited for an undertaking like the present. But I do not think that wider reading in that direction would have much furthered the object I had in view. That object has been to exhibit the principal ideas of Greek philosophy in the closest possible connexion with the characters of their authors, with each other, with their developments in modern speculation, with the parallel tendencies of literature and art, with the history of religion, of physical science, and of civilisation as a whole. To interpret all things by a system of universal references is the method of philosophy; when applied to a series of events this method is the philosophy of history; when the events are ideas, it is the philosophy of philosophy itself.

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Page 9, line 18. Plutarch (*ut fertur*), *Plac. Phil.*, I., iii., 4.

Page 15, line 26. Xenophanes, *Fragm.* 19 and 21, ed. Mullach.

Page 41, line 25. Diogenes Laert., IX., 34. The words 'in the Eastern countries where he had travelled,' are a conjectural addition, but they seem justified by the context.

Page 43, line 11. Plutarch, *Pericles*, iv.

Page 65. For the story of Glaucus, see Herodotus VI., lxxxvi.

Page 77, line 21. Plato, *Protag.*, 315, D.

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THE GREEK PHILOSOPHERS.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY GREEK THOUGHT.

I.

DURING the two centuries that ended with the close of the Peloponnesian war, a single race, weak numerically, and weakened still further by political disunion, simultaneously developed all the highest human faculties to an extent possibly rivalled but certainly not surpassed by the collective efforts of that vastly greater population which now wields the accumulated resources of modern Europe. This race, while maintaining a precarious foothold on the shores of the Mediterranean by repeated prodigies of courage and genius, contributed a new element to civilisation which has been the mainspring of all subsequent progress, but which, as it expanded into wider circles and encountered an increasing resistance from without, unavoidably lost some of the enormous elasticity that characterised its earliest and most concentrated reaction. It was the just boast of the Greek that to Asiatic refinement and Thracian valour he joined a disinterested thirst for knowledge unshared by his neighbours on either side.[1] And if a contemporary of Pericles could have foreseen all that would be thought, and said, and done during

[1] Plato, *Rep.* IV., 435, E; Aristotle, *Pol.* VII., 1327, b., 29.

the next twenty-three centuries of this world's existence, at no period during that long lapse of ages, not even among the kindred Italian race, could he have found a competitor to contest with Hellas the olive crown of a nobler Olympia, the guerdon due to a unique combination of supreme excellence in every variety of intellectual exercise, in strategy, diplomacy, statesmanship; in mathematical science, architecture, plastic art, and poetry; in the severe fidelity of the historian whose paramount object is to relate facts as they have occurred, and the dexterous windings of the advocate whose interest leads him to evade or to disguise them; in the far-reaching meditations of the lonely thinker grappling with the enigmas of his own soul, and the fervid eloquence by which a multitude on whose decision hang great issues is inspired, directed, or controlled. He would not, it is true, have found any single Greek to pit against the athletes of the Renaissance; there were none who displayed that universal genius so characteristic of the greatest Tuscan artists such as Lionardo and Michael Angelo; nor, to take a much narrower range, did a single Greek writer whose compositions have come down to us excel, or even attempt to excel, in poetry and prose alike. But our imaginary prophet might have observed that such versatility better befitted a sophist like Hippias or an adventurer like Critias than an earnest master of the Pheidian type. He might have quoted Pindar's sarcasm about highly educated persons who have an infinity of tastes and bring none of them to perfection;[1] holding, as Plato did in the next generation, that one man can only do one thing well, he might have added that the heroes of modern art would have done much nobler work had they concentrated their powers on a single task instead of attempting half a dozen and leaving most of them incomplete.

This careful restriction of individual effort to a single

[1] *Nem.* III. 40–42. (Donaldson.)

province involved no dispersion or incoherence in the results achieved. The highest workers were all animated by a common spirit. Each represented some one aspect of the glory and greatness participated in by all. Nor was the collective consciousness, the uniting sympathy, limited to a single sphere. It rose, by a graduated series, from the city community, through the Dorian or Ionian stock with which they claimed more immediate kinship, to the Panhellenic race, the whole of humanity, and the divine fatherhood of Zeus, until it rested in that all-embracing nature which Pindar knew as the one mother of gods and men.[1]

We may, perhaps, find some suggestion of this combined distinctness and comprehensiveness in the aspect and configuration of Greece itself; in its manifold varieties of soil, and climate, and scenery, and productions; in the exquisite clearness with which the features of its landscape are defined; and the admirable development of coast-line by which all parts of its territory, while preserving their political independence, were brought into safe and speedy communication with one another. The industrial and commercial habits of the people, necessitating a well-marked division of labour and a regulated distribution of commodities, gave a further impulse in the same direction.

But what afforded the most valuable education in this sense was their system of free government, involving, as it did, the supremacy of an impersonal law, the subdivision of public authority among a number of magistrates, and the assignment to each of certain carefully defined functions which he was forbidden to exceed; together with the living interest felt by each citizen in the welfare of the whole state, and that conception of it as a whole composed of various parts, which is impossible where all the public powers are collected in a single hand.

A people so endowed were the natural creators of philo-

[1] *Nem.* VI. *sub in.*

sophy. There came a time when the harmonious universality of the Hellenic genius sought for its counterpart and completion in a theory of the external world. And there came a time, also, when the decay of political interests left a large fund of intellectual energy, accustomed to work under certain conditions, with the desire to realise those conditions in an ideal sphere. Such is the most general significance we can attach to that memorable series of speculations on the nature of things which, beginning in Ionia, was carried by the Greek colonists to Italy and Sicily, whence, after receiving important additions and modifications, the stream of thought flowed back into the old country, where it was directed into an entirely new channel by the practical genius of Athens. Thales and his successors down to Democritus were not exactly what we should call philosophers, in any sense of the word that would include a Locke or a Hume, and exclude a Boyle or a Black; for their speculations never went beyond the confines of the material universe; they did not even suspect the existence of those ethical and dialectical problems which long constituted the sole object of philosophical discussion, and have continued since the time when they were first mooted to be regarded as its most peculiar province. Nor yet can we look on them altogether or chiefly as men of science, for their paramount purpose was to gather up the whole of knowledge under a single principle; and they sought to realise this purpose, not by observation and experiment, but by the power of thought alone. It would, perhaps, be truest to say that from their point of view philosophy and science were still undifferentiated, and that knowledge as a universal synthesis was not yet divorced from special investigations into particular orders of phenomena. Here, as elsewhere, advancing reason tends to reunite studies which have been provisionally separated, and we must look to our own contemporaries—to our Tyndalls and Thomsons, our Helmholtzes and Zöllners—as furnishing the fittest parallel to

Anaximander and Empedocles, Leucippus and Diogenes of Apollonia.

It has been the fashion in certain quarters to look down on these early thinkers—to depreciate the value of their speculations because they were thinkers, because, as we have already noticed, they reached their most important conclusions by thinking, the means of truly scientific observation not being within their reach. Nevertheless, they performed services to humanity comparable for value with the legislation of Solon and Cleisthenes, or the victories of Marathon and Salamis; while their creative imagination was not inferior to that of the great lyric and dramatic poets, the great architects and sculptors, whose contemporaries they were. They first taught men to distinguish between the realities of nature and the illusions of sense; they discovered or divined the indestructibility of matter and its atomic constitution; they taught that space is infinite, a conception so far from being self-evident that it transcended the capacity of Aristotle to grasp; they held that the seemingly eternal universe was brought into its present form by the operation of mechanical forces which will also effect its dissolution; confronted by the seeming permanence and solidity of our planet, with the innumerable varieties of life to be found on its surface, they declared that all things had arisen by differentiation [1] from a homogeneous attenuated vapour; while one of them went so far as to surmise that man is descended from an aquatic animal. But higher still than these fragmentary glimpses and anticipations of a theory which still awaits confirmation from experience, we must place their central doctrine, that the universe is a cosmos, an ordered whole governed by number and law, not a blind conflict of semi-conscious agents, or a theatre for the arbitrary interference of partial, jealous,

[1] The word differentiation (ἑτεροίωσις) seems to have been first used by Diogenes Apolloniates. Simpl. *Phys.* fol. 326 ff., quoted by Ritter and Preller, *Hist. Phil.*, p. 126 (6th ed.)

and vindictive gods; that its changes are determined, if at all, by an immanent unchanging reason; and that those celestial luminaries which had drawn to themselves in every age the unquestioning worship of all mankind were, in truth, nothing more than fiery masses of inanimate matter. Thus, even if the early Greek thinkers were not scientific, they first made science possible by substituting for a theory of the universe which is its direct negation, one that methodised observation has increasingly tended to confirm. The garland of poetic praise woven by Lucretius for his adored master should have been dedicated to them, and to them alone. His noble enthusiasm was really inspired by their lessons, not by the wearisome trifling of a moralist who knew little and cared less about those studies in which the whole soul of his Roman disciple was absorbed.

When the power and value of these primitive speculations can no longer be denied, their originality is sometimes questioned by the systematic detractors of everything Hellenic. Thales and the rest, we are told, simply borrowed their theories without acknowledgment from a storehouse of Oriental wisdom on which the Greeks are supposed to have drawn as freely as Coleridge drew on German philosophy. Sometimes each system is affiliated to one of the great Asiatic religions; sometimes they are all traced back to the schools of Hindostan. It is natural that no two critics should agree, when the rival explanations are based on nothing stronger than superficial analogies and accidental coincidences. Dr. Zeller in his wonderfully learned, clear, and sagacious work on Greek philosophy, has carefully sifted some of the hypotheses referred to, and shown how destitute they are of internal or external evidence, and how utterly they fail to account for the facts. The oldest and best authorities, Plato and Aristotle, knew nothing about such a derivation of Greek thought from Eastern sources. Isocrates does, indeed, mention that Pythagoras borrowed his philosophy

from Egypt, but Isocrates did not even pretend to be a truthful narrator. No Greek of the early period except those regularly domiciled in Susa seems to have been acquainted with any language but his own. Few travelled very far into Asia, and of those few, only one or two were philosophers. Democritus, who visited more foreign countries than any man of his time, speaks only of having discussed mathematical problems with the wise men whom he encountered; and even in mathematics he was at least their equal.[1] It was precisely at the greatest distance from Asia, in Italy and Sicily, that the systems arose which seem to have most analogy with Asiatic modes of thought. Can we suppose that the traders of those times were in any way qualified to transport the speculations of Confucius and the Vedas to such a distance from their native homes? With far better reason might one expect a German merchant to carry a knowledge of Kant's philosophy from Königsberg to Canton. But a more convincing argument than any is to show that Greek philosophy in its historical evolution exhibits a perfectly natural and spontaneous progress from simpler to more complex forms, and that system grew out of system by a strictly logical process of extension, analysis, and combination. This is what, chiefly under the guidance of Zeller, we shall now attempt to do.

II.

Thales, of Miletus, an Ionian geometrician and astronomer, about whose age considerable uncertainty prevails, but who seems to have flourished towards the close of the seventh century before our era, is by general consent regarded as the father of Greek physical philosophy. Others before him had attempted to account for the world's origin, but none like him had traced it back to a purely natural beginning. According to Thales all things have come from water. That

[1] Ritter and Preller, p. 112.

the earth is entirely enclosed by water above and below as well as all round was perhaps a common notion among the Western Asiatics. It was certainly believed by the Hebrews, as we learn from the accounts of the creation and the flood contained in Genesis. The Milesian thinker showed his originality by generalising still further and declaring that not only did water surround all things, but that all things were derived from it as their first cause and substance, that water was, so to speak, the material absolute. Never have more pregnant words been spoken ; they acted like a ferment on the Greek mind ; they were the grain whence grew a tree that has overshadowed the whole earth. At one stroke they substituted a comparatively scientific, because a verifiable principle for the confused fancies of mythologising poets. Not that Thales was an atheist, or an agnostic, or anything of that sort. On the contrary, he is reported to have said that all things were full of gods ; and the report sounds credible enough. Most probably the saying was a protest against the popular limitation of divine agencies to certain special occasions and favoured localities. A true thinker seeks above all for consistency and continuity. He will more readily accept a perpetual stream of creative energy than a series of arbitrary and isolated interferences with the course of Nature. For the rest, Thales made no attempt to explain how water came to be transformed into other substances, nor is it likely that the necessity of such an explanation had ever occurred to him. We may suspect that he and others after him were not capable of distinguishing very clearly between such notions as space, time, cause, substance, and limit. It is almost as difficult for us to enter into the thoughts of these primitive philosophers as it would have been for them to comprehend processes of reasoning already familiar to Plato and Aristotle. Possibly the forms under which we arrange our conceptions may become equally obsolete at a more advanced stage of intellectual evolution, and our sharp distinctions may prove to be not

less artificial than the confused identifications which they have superseded.

The next great forward step in speculation was taken by Anaximander, another Milesian, also of distinguished attainments in mathematics and astronomy. We have seen that to Thales water, the all-embracing element, became, as such, the first cause of all things, the absolute principle of existence. His successor adopted the same general point of view, but looked out from it with a more penetrating gaze. Beyond water lay something else which he called the Infinite. He did not mean the empty abstraction which has stalked about in modern times under that ill-omened name, nor yet did he mean infinite space, but something richer and more concrete than either; a storehouse of materials whence the waste of existence could be perpetually made good. The growth and decay of individual forms involve a ceaseless drain on Nature, and the deficiency must be supplied by a corresponding influx from without. For, be it observed that, although the Greek thinkers were at this period well aware that nothing can come from nothing, they had not yet grasped the complementary truth inalienably wedded to it by Lucretius in one immortal couplet, that nothing can return to nothing; and Kant is quite mistaken when he treats the two as historically inseparable. Common experience forces the one on our attention much sooner than the other. Our incomings are very strictly measured out and accounted for without difficulty, while it is hard to tell what becomes of all our expenditure, physical and economical. Yet, although the indestructibility of matter was a conception which had not yet dawned on Anaximander, he seems to have been feeling his way towards the recognition of a circulatory movement pervading all Nature. Everything, he says, must at last be reabsorbed in the Infinite as a punishment for the sin of its separate existence.[1] Some may find in this sentiment a note of Oriental

[1] Ritter and Preller, p. 8.

mysticism. Rather does its very sadness illustrate the healthy vitality of Greek feeling, to which absorption seemed like the punishment of a crime against the absolute, and not, as to so many Asiatics, the crown and consummation of spiritual perfection. Be this as it may, a doctrine which identified the death of the whole world with its reabsorption into a higher reality would soon suggest the idea that its component parts vanish only to reappear in new combinations.

Anaximander's system was succeeded by a number of others which cannot be arranged according to any order of linear progression. Such arrangements are, indeed, false in principle. Intellectual life, like every other life, is a product of manifold conditions, and their varied combinations are certain to issue in a corresponding multiplicity of effects. Anaximenes, a fellow-townsman of Anaximander, followed most closely in the footsteps of the master. Attempting, as it would appear, to mediate between his two predecessors, he chose air for a primal element. Air is more omnipresent than water, which, as well as earth, is enclosed within its plastic sphere. On the other hand, it is more tangible and concrete than the Infinite, or may even be substituted for that conception by supposing it to extend as far as thought can reach. As before, cosmogony grows out of cosmography; the enclosing element is the parent of those embraced within it.

Speculation now leaves its Asiatic cradle and travels with the Greek colonists to new homes in Italy and Sicily, where new modes of thought were fostered by a new environment. A name, round which mythical accretions have gathered so thickly that the original nucleus of fact almost defies definition, first claims our attention. Aristotle, as is well known, avoids mentioning Pythagoras, and always speaks of the Pythagoreans when he is discussing the opinions held by a certain Italian school. Their doctrine, whoever originated it, was that all things are made out of number. Brandis regards Pythagoreanism as an entirely original effort of speculation,

standing apart from the main current of Hellenic thought, and to be studied without reference to Ionian philosophy. Zeller, with more plausibility, treats it as an outgrowth of Anaximander's system. In that system the finite and the infinite remained opposed to one another as unreconciled moments of thought. Number, according to the Greek arithmeticians, was a synthesis of the two, and therefore superior to either. To a Pythagorean the finite and the infinite were only one among several antithetical couples, such as odd and even, light and darkness, male and female, and, above all, the one and the many whence every number after unity is formed. The tendency to search for antitheses everywhere, and to manufacture them where they do not exist, became ere long an actual disease of the Greek mind. A Thucydides could no more have dispensed with this cumbrous mechanism than a rope-dancer could get on without his balancing pole; and many a schoolboy has been sorely puzzled by the fantastic contortions which Italiote reflection imposed for a time on Athenian oratory.

Returning to our more immediate subject, we must observe that the Pythagoreans did not maintain, in anticipation of modern quantitative science, that all things are determined by number, but that all things are numbers, or are made out of numbers, two propositions not easily distinguished by unpractised thinkers. Numbers, in a word, were to them precisely what water had been to Thales, what air was to Anaximenes, the absolute principle of existence; only with them the idea of a limit, the leading inspiration of Greek thought, had reached a higher degree of abstraction. Number was, as it were, the exterior limit of the finite, and the interior limit of the infinite. Add to this that mathematical studies, cultivated in Egypt and Phoenicia for their practical utility alone, were being pursued in Hellas with ever-increasing ardour for the sake of their own delightfulness, for the intellectual discipline that they supplied—a discipline even

more valuable then than now, and for the insight which they bestowed, or were believed to bestow, into the secret constitution of Nature; and that the more complicated arithmetical operations were habitually conducted with the aid of geometrical diagrams, thus suggesting the possibility of applying a similar treatment to every order of relations. Consider the lively emotions excited among an intelligent people at a time when multiplication and division, squaring and cubing, the rule of three, the construction and equivalence of figures, with all their manifold applications to industry, commerce, fine art, and tactics, were just as strange and wonderful as electrical phenomena are to us; consider also the magical influence still commonly attributed to particular numbers, and the intense eagerness to obtain exact numerical statements, even when they are of no practical value, exhibited by all who are thrown back on primitive ways of living, as, for example, in Alpine travelling, or on board an Atlantic steamer, and we shall cease to wonder that a mere form of thought, a lifeless abstraction, should once have been regarded as the solution of every problem, the cause of all existence; or that these speculations were more than once revived in after ages, and perished only with Greek philosophy itself.

We have not here to examine the scientific achievements of Pythagoras and his school; they belong to the history of science, not to that of pure thought, and therefore lie outside the present discussion. Something, however, must be said of Pythagoreanism as a scheme of moral, religious, and social reform. Alone among the pre-Socratic systems, it undertook to furnish a rule of conduct as well as a theory of being. Yet, as Zeller has pointed out,[1] it was only an apparent anomaly, for the ethical teaching of the Pythagoreans was not based on their physical theories, except in so far as a deep reverence for law and order was common to both.

[1] *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, I. p. 401 (3rd ed.)

Perhaps, also, the separation of soul and body, with the ascription of a higher dignity to the former, which was a distinctive tenet of the school, may be paralleled with the position given to number as a kind of spiritual power creating and controlling the world of sense. So also political power was to be entrusted to an aristocracy trained in every noble accomplishment, and fitted for exercising authority over others by self-discipline, by mutual fidelity, and by habitual obedience to a rule of right. Nevertheless, we must look, with Zeller, for the true source of Pythagoreanism as a moral movement in that great wave of religious enthusiasm which swept over Hellas during the sixth century before Christ, intimately associated with the importation of Apollo-worship from Lycia, with the concentration of spiritual authority in the oracular shrine of Delphi, and the political predominance of the Dorian race, those Normans of the ancient world. Legend has thrown this connexion into a poetical form by making Pythagoras the son of Apollo; and the Samian sage, although himself an Ionian, chose the Dorian cities of Southern Italy as a favourable field for his new teaching, just as Calvinism found a readier acceptance in the advanced posts of the Teutonic race than among the people whence its founder sprang. Perhaps the nearest parallel, although on a far more extensive scale, for the religious movement of which we are speaking, is the spectacle offered by mediaeval Europe during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries of our era, when a series of great Popes had concentrated all spiritual power in their own hands, and were sending forth army after army of Crusaders to the East; when all Western Europe had awakened to the consciousness of its common Christianity, and each individual was thrilled by a sense of the tremendous alternatives committed to his choice; when the Dominican and Franciscan orders were founded; when Gothic architecture and Florentine painting arose; when the Troubadours and Minnesängers were pour-

ing out their notes of scornful or tender passion, and the love of the sexes had become a sentiment as lofty and enduring as the devotion of friend to friend had been in Greece of old. The bloom of Greek religious enthusiasm was more exquisite and evanescent than that of feudal Catholicism; inferior in pure spirituality and of more restricted significance as a factor in the evolution of humanity, it at least remained free from the ecclesiastical tyranny, the murderous fanaticism, and the unlovely superstitions of mediaeval faith. But polytheism under any form was fatally incapable of coping with the new spirit of enquiry awakened by philosophy, and the old myths, with their naturalistic crudities, could not long satisfy the reason and conscience of thinkers who had learned in another school to seek everywhere for a central unity of control, and to bow their imaginations before the passionless perfection of eternal law.

III.

Such a thinker was Xenophanes, of Colophon. Driven, like Pythagoras, from his native city by civil discords, he spent the greater part of an unusually protracted life wandering through the Greek colonies of Sicily and Southern Italy, and reciting his own verses, not always, as it would appear, to a very attentive audience. Elea, an Italiote city, seems to have been his favourite resort, and the school of philosophy which he founded there has immortalised the name of this otherwise obscure Phocaean settlement. Enough remains of his verses to show with what terrible strength of sarcasm he assailed the popular religion of Hellas. 'Homer and Hesiod,' he exclaims, 'have attributed to the gods everything that is a shame and reproach among men—theft, adultery, and mutual deception.'[1] Nor is Xenophanes content with attacking

[1] Ritter and Preller, p. 54.

these unedifying stories, he strikes at the anthropomorphic conceptions which lay at their root. 'Mortals think that the gods have senses, and a voice and a body like their own. The negroes fancy that their deities are black-skinned and snub-nosed, the Thracians give theirs fair hair and blue eyes; if horses or lions had hands and could paint, they too would make gods in their own image.'[1] It was, he declared, as impious to believe in the birth of a god as to believe in the possibility of his death. The current polytheism was equally false. 'There is one Supreme God among gods and men, unlike mortals both in mind and body.'[2] There can be only one God, for God is Omnipotent, so that there must be none to dispute his will. He must also be perfectly homogeneous, shaped like a sphere, seeing, hearing, and thinking with every part alike, never moving from place to place, but governing all things by an effortless exercise of thought. Had such daring heresies been promulgated in democratic Athens, their author would probably have soon found himself and his works handed over to the tender mercies of the Eleven. Happily at Elea, and in most other Greek states, the gods were left to take care of themselves.

Xenophanes does not seem to have been ever molested on account of his religious opinions. He complains bitterly enough that people preferred fiction to philosophy, that uneducated athletes engrossed far too much popular admiration, that he, Xenophanes, was not sufficiently appreciated; but of theological intolerance, so far as our information goes, he says not one single word. It will easily be conceived that the rapid progress of Greek speculation was singularly favoured by such unbounded freedom of thought and speech. The views just set forth have often been regarded as a step towards spiritualistic monotheism, and so, considered in the light of subsequent developments, they unquestionably were. Still, looking at the matter from another aspect, we may say

[1] Ritter and Preller, p. 54. [2] *Ib.*

that Xenophanes, when he shattered the idols of popular religion, was returning to the past rather than anticipating the future; feeling his way back to the deeper, more primordial faith of the old Aryan race, or even of that still older stock whence Aryan and Turanian alike diverged. He turns from the brilliant, passionate, fickle Dyaus, to Zên, or Ten, the ever-present, all-seeing, all-embracing, immovable vault of heaven. Aristotle, with a sympathetic insight unfortunately too rare in his criticisms on earlier systems, observes that Xenophanes did not make it clear whether the absolute unity he taught was material or ideal, but simply looked up at the whole heaven and declared that the One was God.[1] Aristotle was himself the real creator of philosophic monotheism, just because the idea of living, self-conscious personality had a greater value, a profounder meaning for him than for any other thinker of antiquity, one may almost say than for any other thinker whatever. It is, therefore, a noteworthy circumstance that, while warmly acknowledging the anticipations of Anaxagoras, he nowhere speaks of Xenophanes as a predecessor in the same line of enquiry. The latter might be called a pantheist were it not that pantheism belongs to a much later stage of speculation, one, in fact, not reached by the Greek mind at any period of its development. His leading conception was obscured by a confusion of mythological with purely physical ideas, and could only bear full fruit when the religious element had been entirely eliminated from its composition. This elimination was accomplished by a far greater thinker, one who combined poetic inspiration with philosophic depth; who was penetrating enough to discern the logical consequences involved in a fundamental principle of thought, and bold enough to push them to their legitimate conclusions without caring for the shock to sense and common opinion that his merciless dialectic might inflict.

[1] *Metaph.* I. v.

Parmenides, of Elea, flourished towards the beginning of the fifth century B.C. We know very little about his personal history. According to Plato, he visited Athens late in life, and there made the acquaintance of Socrates, at that time a very young man. But an unsupported statement of Plato's must always be received with extreme caution; and this particular story is probably not less fictitious than the dialogue which it serves to introduce. Parmenides embodied his theory of the world in a poem, the most important passages of which have been preserved. They show that, while continuing the physical studies of his predecessors, he proceeded on an entirely different method. Their object was to deduce every variety of natural phenomena from a fundamental unity of substance. He declared that all variety and change were a delusion, and that nothing existed but one indivisible, unalterable, absolute reality; just as Descartes' antithesis of thought and extension disappeared in the infinite substance of Spinoza, or as the Kantian dualism of object and subject was eliminated in Hegel's absolute idealism. Again, Parmenides does not dogmatise to the same extent as his predecessors; he attempts to demonstrate his theory by the inevitable necessities of being and thought. Existence, he tells us over and over again, *is*, and non-existence is not, cannot even be imagined or thought of as existing, for thought is the same as being. This is not an anticipation of Hegel's identification of being with thought; it only amounts to the very innocent proposition that a thought is something and about something—enters, therefore, into the general undiscriminated mass of being. He next proceeds to prove that what is can neither come into being nor pass out of it again. It cannot come out of the non-existent, for that is inconceivable; nor out of the existent, for nothing exists but being itself; and the same argument proves that it cannot cease to exist. Here we find the indestructibility of matter, a truth which Anaximander

had not yet grasped, virtually affirmed for the first time in history. We find also that our philosopher is carried away by the enthusiasm of a new discovery, and covers more ground than he can defend in maintaining the permanence of all existence whatever. The reason is that to him, as to every other thinker of the pre-Socratic period, all existence was material, or, rather, all reality was confounded under one vague conception, of which visible resisting extension supplied the most familiar type. To proceed: Being cannot be divided from being, nor is it capable of condensation or expansion (as the Ionians had taught); there is nothing by which it can be separated or held apart; nor is it ever more or less existent, but all is full of being. Parmenides goes on in his grand style :—

> 'Therefore the whole extends continuously,
> Being by Being set; immovable,
> Subject to the constraint of mighty laws;
> Both increate and indestructible,
> Since birth and death have wandered far away
> By true conviction into exile driven;
> The same, in self-same place, and by itself
> Abiding, doth abide most firmly fixed,
> And bounded round by strong Necessity.
> Wherefore a holy law forbids that Being
> Should be without an end, else want were there,
> And want of that would be a want of all.'[1]

Thus does the everlasting Greek love of order, definition, limitation, reassert its supremacy over the intelligence of this noble thinker, just as his almost mystical enthusiasm has reached its highest pitch of exaltation, giving him back a world which thought can measure, circumscribe, and control.

Being, then, is finite in extent, and, as a consequence of its absolute homogeneity, spherical in form. There is good reason for believing that the earth's true figure was first discovered in the fifth century B.C., but whether it was suggested by the *à priori* theories of Parmenides, or was

[1] Ritter and Preller, p. 63.

generalised by him into a law of the whole universe, or whether there was more than an accidental connexion between the two hypotheses, we cannot tell. Aristotle, at any rate, was probably as much indebted to the Eleatic system as to contemporary astronomy for his theory of a finite spherical universe. It will easily be observed that the distinction between space and matter, so obvious to us, and even to Greek thinkers of a later date, had not yet dawned upon Parmenides. As applied to the former conception, most of his affirmations are perfectly correct, but his belief in the finiteness of Being can only be justified on the supposition that Being is identified with matter. For it must be clearly understood (and Zeller has the great merit of having proved this fact by incontrovertible arguments)[1] that the Eleatic Being was not a transcendental conception, nor an abstract unity, as Aristotle erroneously supposed, nor a Kantian noumenon, nor a spiritual essence of any kind, but a phenomenal reality of the most concrete description. We can only not call Parmenides a materialist, because materialism implies a negation of spiritualism, which in his time had not yet come into existence. He tells us plainly that a man's thoughts result from the conformation of his body, and are determined by the preponderating element in its composition. Not much, however, can be made of this rudimentary essay in psychology, connected as it seems to be with an appendix to the teaching of our philosopher, in which he accepts the popular dualism, although still convinced of its falsity, and uses it, under protest, as an explanation of that very genesis which he had rejected as impossible.

As might be expected, the Parmenidean paradoxes provoked a considerable amount of contradiction and ridicule. The Reids and Beatties of that time drew sundry absurd consequences from the new doctrine, and offered them as a sufficient refutation of its truth. Zeno, a young friend and

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 475.

favourite of Parmenides, took up arms in his master's defence, and sought to prove with brilliant dialectical ability that consequences still more absurd might be deduced from the opposite belief. He originated a series of famous puzzles respecting the infinite divisibility of matter and the possibility of motion, subsequently employed as a disproof of all certainty by the Sophists and Sceptics, and occasionally made to serve as arguments on behalf of agnosticism by writers of our own time. Stated generally, they may be reduced to two. A whole composed of parts and divisible *ad infinitum* must be either infinitely great or infinitely little; infinitely great if its parts have magnitude, infinitely little if they have not. A moving body can never come to the end of a given line, for it must first traverse half the line, then half the remainder, and so on for ever. Aristotle thought that the difficulty about motion could be solved by taking the infinite divisibility of time into account; and Coleridge, according to his custom, repeated the explanation without acknowledgment. But Zeno would have refused to admit that any infinite series could come to an end, whether it was composed of successive or of co-existent parts. So long as the abstractions of our understanding are treated as separate entities, these and similar puzzles will continue to exercise the ingenuity of metaphysicians. Our present business, however, is not to solve Zeno's difficulties, but to show how they illustrate a leading characteristic of Greek thought, its tendency to perpetual analysis, a tendency not limited to the philosophy of the Greeks, but pervading the whole of their literature and even of their art. Homer carefully distinguishes the successive steps of every action, and leads up to every catastrophe by a series of finely graduated transitions. Like Zeno, again, he pursues a system of dichotomy, passing rapidly over the first half of his subject, and relaxes the speed of his narrative by going into ever-closer detail until the consummation is reached. Such a poem as the 'Achilleis' of modern critics

would have been perfectly intolerable to a Greek, from the too rapid and uniform march of its action. Herodotus proceeds after a precisely similar fashion, advancing from a broad and free treatment of history to elaborate minuteness of detail. So, too, a Greek temple divides itself into parts so distinct, yet so closely connected, that the eye, after separating, as easily recombines them into a whole. The evolution of Greek music tells the same tale of progressive subdivision, which is also illustrated by the passage from long speeches to single lines, and from these again to half lines in the dialogue of a Greek drama. No other people could have created mathematical demonstration, for no other would have had skill and patience enough to discover the successive identities interposed between and connecting the sides of an equation. The dialectic of Socrates and Plato, the somewhat wearisome distinctions of Aristotle, and, last of all, the fine-spun series of triads inserted by Proclus between the superessential One and the fleeting world of sense,—were all products of the same fundamental tendency, alternately most fruitful and most barren in its results. It may be objected that Zeno, so far from obeying this tendency, followed a diametrically opposite principle, that of absolutely unbroken continuity. True; but the 'Eleatic Palamedes' fought his adversaries with a weapon wrested out of their own hands; rejecting analysis as a law of real existence, he continued to employ it as a logical artifice with greater subtlety than had ever yet been displayed in pure speculation.[1]

[1] The tendency which it has been attempted to characterise as a fundamental moment of Greek thought can only be called analytical in default of a better word. It is a process by which two related terms are at once parted and joined together by the insertion of one or more intermediary links; as, for instance, when a capital is inserted between column and architrave, or when a proposition is demonstrated by the interposition of a middle term between its subject and predicate. The German words Vermitteln and Vermittelung express what is meant with sufficient exactitude. They play a great part in Hegel's philosophy, and it will be remembered that Hegel was the most Hellenic of modern thinkers. So understood, there will cease to be any contradiction between the Eleates and

Besides Zeno, Parmenides seems to have had only one disciple of note, Melissus, the Samian statesman and general; but under various modifications and combined with other elements, the Eleatic absolute entered as a permanent factor into Greek speculation. From it were lineally descended the Sphairos of Empedocles, the eternal atoms of Leucippus, the Nous of Anaxagoras, the Megaric Good, the supreme solar idea of Plato, the self-thinking thought of Aristotle, the imperturbable tranquillity attributed to their model sage by Stoics and Epicureans alike, the sovereign indifference of the Sceptics, and finally, the Neo-platonic One. Modern philosophers have sought for their supreme ideal in power, movement, activity, life, rather than in any stationary substance; yet even among them we find Herbart partially reviving the Eleatic theory, and confronting Hegel's fluent categories with his own inflexible monads.

We have now to study an analogous, though far less complicated, antagonism in ancient Greece, and to show how her most brilliant period of physical philosophy arose from the combination of two seemingly irreconcilable systems. Parmenides, in an address supposed to be delivered by Wisdom to her disciple, warns us against the method pursued by 'ignorant mortals, the blind, deaf, stupid, confused tribes, who hold that to be and not to be are the same, and that all things move round by an inverted path.'[1] What Parmenides denounced as arrant nonsense was deliberately proclaimed to be the highest truth by his illustrious contemporary, Heracleitus, of Ephesus. This wonderful thinker is popularly known as the weeping philosopher, because, according to a very silly tradition, he never went abroad without shedding tears over the follies of mankind. No such mawkish sentimentality, but bitter scorn and indignation, marked the attitude of

Greek thought generally, at least from one point of view, as their object was to fill up the vacant spaces supposed to separate one mode of existence from another.

[1] Ritter and Preller, p. 62.

Heracleitus towards his fellows. A self-taught sage, he had no respect for the accredited instructors of Hellas. 'Much learning,' he says, 'does not teach reason, else it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, Xenophanes and Hecataeus.'[1] Homer, he declares, ought to be flogged out of the public assemblages, and Archilochus likewise. When the highest reputations met with so little mercy, it will readily be imagined what contempt he poured on the vulgar herd. The feelings of a high-born aristocrat combine with those of a lofty genius to point and wing his words. 'The many are bad and few are the good. The best choose one thing instead of all, a perpetual well-spring of fame, while the many glut their appetites like beasts. One man is equal to ten thousand if he is the best.' This contempt was still further intensified by the very excusable incapacity of the public to understand profound thought conveyed in a style proverbial for its obscurity. 'Men cannot comprehend the eternal law; when I have explained the order of Nature they are no wiser than before.' What, then, was this eternal law, a knowledge of which Heracleitus found so difficult to popularise? Let us look back for a moment at the earlier Ionian systems. They had taught that the universe arose either by differentiation or by condensation and expansion from a single primordial substance, into which, as Anaximander, at least, held, everything at last returned. Now, Heracleitus taught that this transformation is a universal, never-ending, never-resting process; that all things are moving; that Nature is like a stream in which no man can bathe twice; that rest and stability are the law, not of life, but of death. Again, the Pythagorean school, as we have seen, divided all things into a series of sharply distinguished antithetical pairs. Heracleitus either directly identified the terms of every opposition, or regarded them as necessarily combined, or as continually

[1] For the originals of this and the succeeding quotations from Heracleitus, see Ritter and Preller, pp. 14–23.

passing into one another. Perhaps we shall express his meaning most thoroughly by saying that he would have looked on all three propositions as equivalent statements of a single fact. In accordance with this principle he calls war the father and king and lord of all, and denounces Homer's prayer for the abolition of strife as an unconscious blasphemy against the universe itself. Yet, even his powerful intellect could not grasp the conception of a shifting relativity as the law and life of things without embodying it in a particular material substratum. Following the Ionian tradition, he sought for a world-element, and found it in that cosmic fire which enveloped the terrestrial atmosphere, and of which the heavenly luminaries were supposed to be formed. 'Fire,' says the Ephesian philosopher, no doubt adapting his language to the comprehension of a great commercial community, 'is the general medium of exchange, as gold is given for everything, and everything for gold.' 'The world was not created by any god or any man, but always was, and is, and shall be, an ever-living fire, periodically kindled and quenched.' By cooling and condensation, water is formed from fire, and earth from water; then, by a converse process called the way up as the other was the way down, earth again passes into water and water into fire. At the end of certain stated periods the whole world is to be reconverted into fire, but only to enter on a new cycle in the series of its endless revolutions —a conception, so far, remarkably confirmed by modern science. The whole theory, including a future world-conflagration, was afterwards adopted by the Stoics, and probably exercised a considerable influence on the eschatology of the early Christian Church. Imagination is obliged to work under forms which thought has already superseded; and Heracleitus as a philosopher had forestalled the dazzling consummation to which as a prophet he might look forward in wonder and hope. For, his elemental fire was only a picturesque presentation indispensable to him, but not to us, of the

sovereign law wherein all things live and move and have their being. To have introduced such an idea into speculation was his distinctive and inestimable achievement, although it may have been suggested by the εἱμαρμένη or destiny of the theological poets, a term occasionally employed in his writings. It had a moral as well as a physical meaning, or rather it hovers ambiguously between the two. 'The sun shall not transgress his bounds, or the Erinyes who help justice will find him out.' It is the source of human laws, the common reason which binds men together, therefore they should hold by it even more firmly than by the laws of the State. It is not only all-wise but all-good, even where it seems to be the reverse ; for our distinctions between good and evil, just and unjust, vanish in the divine harmony of Nature, the concurrent energies and identifying transformations of her universal life.

According to Aristotle, the Heracleitean flux was inconsistent with the highest law of thought, and made all predication impossible. It has been shown that the master himself recognised a fixed recurring order of change which could be affirmed if nothing else could. But the principle of change, once admitted, seemed to act like a corrosive solvent, too powerful for any vessel to contain. Disciples were soon found who pushed it to extreme consequences with the effect of abolishing all certainty whatever. In Plato's time it was impossible to argue with a Heracleitean ; he could never be tied down to a definite statement. Every proposition became false as soon as it was uttered, or rather before it was out of the speaker's mouth. At last, a distinguished teacher of the school declined to commit himself by using words, and disputed exclusively in dumb show. A dangerous speculative crisis had set in. At either extremity of the Hellenic world the path of scientific inquiry was barred ; on the one hand by a theory eliminating non-existence from thought, and on the other hand by a theory identifying it with existence. The

luminous beam of reflection had been polarised into two divergent rays, each light where the other was dark and dark where the other was light, each denying what the other asserted and asserting what the other denied. For a century physical speculation had taught that the universe was formed by the modification of a single eternal substance, whatever that substance might be. By the end of that period, all becoming was absorbed into being at Elea, and all being into becoming at Ephesus. Each view contained a portion of the truth, and one which perhaps would never have been clearly perceived if it had not been brought into exclusive prominence. But further progress was impossible until the two half-truths had been recombined. We may compare Parmenides and Heracleitus to two lofty and precipitous peaks on either side of an Alpine pass. Each commands a wide prospect, interrupted only on the side of its opposite neighbour. And the fertilising stream of European thought originates with neither of them singly, but has its source midway between.

IV.

We now enter on the last period of purely objective philosophy, an age of mediating and reconciling, but still profoundly original speculation. Its principal representatives, with whom alone we have to deal, are Empedocles, the Atomists, Leucippus and Democritus, and Anaxagoras. There is considerable doubt and difficulty respecting the order in which they should be placed. Anaxagoras was unquestionably the oldest and Democritus the youngest of the four, the difference between their ages being forty years. It is also nearly certain that the Atomists came after Empedocles. But if we take a celebrated expression of Aristotle's[1] literally (as there is no reason why it should not be taken),

[1] Τῇ μὲν ἡλικίᾳ πρότερος ὢν, τοῖς δ' ἔργοις ὕστερος. *Metaph.* I. iii.

Anaxagoras, although born before Empedocles, published his views at a later period. Was he also anticipated by Leucippus? We cannot tell with certainty, but it seems likely from a comparison of their doctrines that he was; and in all cases the man who naturalised philosophy in Athens, and who by his theory of a creative reason furnishes a transition to the age of subjective speculation, will be most conveniently placed at the close of the pre-Socratic period.

A splendid tribute has been paid to the fame of Empedocles by Lucretius, the greatest didactic poet of all time, and by a great didactic poet of our own time, Mr. Matthew Arnold. But the still more rapturous panegyric pronounced by the Roman enthusiast on Epicurus makes his testimony a little suspicious, and the lofty chant of our own contemporary must be taken rather as an expression of his own youthful opinions respecting man's place in Nature, than as a faithful exposition of the Sicilian thinker's creed. Many another name from the history of philosophy might with better reason have been prefixed to that confession of resigned and scornful scepticism entitled *Empedocles on Etna*. The real doctrines of an essentially religious teacher would hardly have been so cordially endorsed by Mr. Swinburne. But perhaps no other character could have excited the deep sympathy felt by one poetic genius for another, when with both of them thought is habitually steeped in emotion. Empedocles was the last Greek of any note who threw his philosophy into a metrical form. Neither Xenophanes nor Parmenides had done this with so much success. No less a critic than Aristotle extols the Homeric splendour of his verses, and Lucretius, in this respect an authority, speaks of them as almost divine. But, judging from the fragments still extant, their speculative content exhibits a distinct decline from the height reached by his immediate predecessors. Empedocles betrays a distrust in man's power of discovering truth, almost, although not quite, unknown to them. Too much certainty would be

impious. He calls on the 'much-wooed white-armed virgin muse' to—

> 'Guide from the seat of Reverence thy bright car,
> And bring to us the creatures of a day,
> What without sin we may aspire to know.'[1]

We also miss in him their single-minded devotion to philosophy and their rigorous unity of doctrine. The Acragantine sage was a party leader (in which capacity, to his great credit, he victoriously upheld the popular cause), a rhetorician, an engineer, a physician, and a thaumaturgist. The well-known legend relating to his death may be taken as a not undeserved satire on the colossal self-conceit of the man who claimed divine honours during his lifetime. Half-mystic and half-rationalist, he made no attempt to reconcile the two inconsistent sides of his intellectual character. It may be compared to one of those grotesque combinations in which, according to his morphology, the heads and bodies of widely different animals were united during the beginnings of life before they had learned to fall into their proper places. He believed in metempsychosis, and professed to remember the somewhat miscellaneous series of forms through which his own personality had already run. He had been a boy, a girl, a bush, a bird, and a fish. Nevertheless, as we shall presently see, his theory of Nature altogether excluded such a notion as the soul's separate existence. We have now to consider what that theory actually was. It will be remembered that Parmenides had affirmed the perpetuity and eternal self-identity of being, but that he had deprived this profound divination of all practical value by interpreting it in a sense which excluded diversity and change. Empedocles also declares creation and destruction to be impossible, but explains that the appearances so denominated arise from the union and separation of four everlasting substances—earth, air, fire, and water. This is the famous doctrine of the four

[1] Ritter and Preller, p. 90.

elements, which, adopted by Plato and Aristotle, was long regarded as the last word of chemistry, and still survives in popular phraseology. Its author may have been guided by an unconscious reflection on the character of his own philosophical method, for was not he, too, constructing a new system out of the elements supplied by his predecessors? They had successively fixed on water, air, and fire as the primordial form of existence; he added a fourth, earth, and effected a sort of reconciliation by placing them all on an equal footing. Curiously enough, the earlier monistic systems had a relative justification which his crude eclecticism lacked. All matter may exist either in a solid, a liquid, or a gaseous form; and all solid matter has reached its present condition after passing through the two other degrees of consistency. That the three modifications should be found coexisting in our own experience is a mere accident of the present régime, and to enumerate them is to substitute a description for an explanation, the usual fault of eclectic systems. Empedocles, however, besides his happy improvement on Parmenides, made a real contribution to thought when, as Aristotle puts it, he sought for a moving as well as for a material cause; in other words, when he asked not only of what elements the world is composed, but also by what forces were they brought together. He tells us of two such causes, Love and Strife, the one a combining, the other a dissociating power. If for these half-mythological names we read attractive and repulsive forces, the result will not be very different from our own current cosmologies. Such terms, when so used as to assume the existence of occult qualities in matter, driving its parts asunder or drawing them close together, are, in truth, as completely mythological as any figments of Hellenic fancy. Unlike their modern antitypes, the Empedoclean goddesses did not reign together, but succeeded one another in alternate dominion during protracted periods of time. The victory of Love was complete when all things had been drawn into a

perfect sphere, evidently the absolute Eleatic Being subjected to a Heracleitean law of vicissitude and contradiction. For Strife lays hold on the consolidated orb, and by her disintegrating action gradually reduces it to a formless chaos, till, at the close of another world-period, the work of creation begins again. Yet growth and decay are so inextricably intertwined that Empedocles failed to keep up this ideal separation, and was compelled to admit the simultaneous activity of both powers in our everyday experience, so that Nature turns out to be composed of six elements instead of four, the mind which perceives it being constituted in a precisely similar manner. But Love, although on the whole victorious, can only gradually get the better of her retreating enemy, and Nature, as we know it, is the result of their continued conflict. Empedocles described the process of evolution, as he conceived it, in somewhat minute detail. Two points only are of much interest to us, his alleged anticipation of the Darwinian theory and his psychology. The former, such as it was, has occasionally been attributed to Lucretius, but the Roman poet most probably copied Epicurus, although the very brief summary of that philosopher's physical system preserved by Diogenes Laertius contains no allusion to such a topic. We know, however, that in Aristotle's time a theory identical with that of Lucretius was held by those who rejected teleological explanations of the world in general and of living organisms in particular. All sorts of animals were produced by spontaneous generation; only those survived which were accidentally furnished with appliances for procuring nourishment and for propagating their kind. The notion itself originated with Empedocles, whose fanciful suppositions have already been mentioned in a different connexion. Most assuredly he did not offer it as a solution of problems which in his time had not yet been mooted, but as an illustration of the confusion which prevailed when Love had only advanced a little way in her ordering, harmonising,

unifying task. Prantl, writing a few years before the appearance of Mr. Darwin's book on the Origin of Species, and therefore without any prejudice on the subject, observes with truth that this theory of Empedocles was deeply rooted in the mythological conceptions of the time.[1] Perhaps he was seeking for a rationalistic explanation of the centaurs, minotaurs, hundred-handed giants, and so forth, in whose existence he had not, like Lucretius, learned completely to disbelieve. His strange supposition was afterwards freed from its worst extravagances ; but even as stated in the *De Rerum Naturâ*, it has no claim whatever to rank as a serious hypothesis. Anything more unlike the Darwinian doctrine, according to which all existing species have been evolved from less highly-organised ancestors by the gradual accumulation of minute differences, it would be difficult to conceive. Every thinker of antiquity, with one exception, believed in the immutability of natural species. They had existed unchanged from all eternity, or had sprung up by spontaneous generation from the earth's bosom in their present form. The solitary dissentient was Anaximander, who conjectured that man was descended from an aquatic animal.[2] Strange to say, this lucky guess has not yet been quoted as an argument against the Ascidian pedigree. It is chiefly the enemies of Darwinism who are eager to find it anticipated in Empedocles or Lucretius. By a curious inversion of traditionalism, it is fancied that a modern discovery can be upset by showing that somebody said something of the kind more than two thousand years ago. Unfortunately authority has not the negative value of disproving the principles which it supports. We must be content to accept the truths brought to light by observation and reasoning, even at the risk of finding ourselves in humiliating agreement with a philosopher of antiquity.[3]

[1] Prantl, *Aristoteles' Physik*, p. 484. [2] Ritter and Preller, p. 11.

[3] Since the above remarks were first published, Mr. Wallace, in his work on

Passing from life to mind, we find Empedocles teaching an even more pronounced materialism than Parmenides, inasmuch as it is stated in language of superior precision. Our souls are, according to him, made up of elements like those which constitute the external world, each of these being perceived by a corresponding portion of the same substances within ourselves—fire by fire, water by water, and so on with the rest. It is a mistake to suppose that speculation begins from a subjective stand-point, that men start with a clear consciousness of their own personality, and proceed to construct an objective universe after the same pattern. Doubtless they are too prone to personify the blind forces of Nature, and Empedocles himself has just supplied us with an example of this tendency, but they err still more by reading outward experience into their own souls, by materialising the processes of consciousness, and resolving human personality into a loose confederacy of inorganic units. Even Plato, who did more than anyone else towards distinguishing between mind and body, ended by laying down his psychology on the lines of an astronomical system. Meanwhile, to have separated the perception of an object from the object itself, in ever so slight a degree, was an important gain to thought.

Epicureanism, has stated that, according to Epicurus, 'the very animals which are found upon the earth have been made what they are by slow processes of selection and adaptation through the experience of life;' and he proceeds to call the theory in question, 'ultra-Darwinian' (*Epicureanism*, p. 114). Lucretius—the authority quoted—says nothing about 'slow processes of adaptation,' nor yet does he say that the animals were 'made what they are' by 'selection,' but by the procreative power of the earth herself. Picking out a ready-made pair of boots from among a number which do not fit is a very different process from manufacturing the same pair by measure, or wearing it into shape. To call the Empedoclean theory ultra-Darwinian, is like calling the Democritean or Epicurean theory of gravitation ultra-Newtonian. And Mr. Wallace seems to admit as much, when he proceeds to say on the very same page, 'Of course in this there is no implication of the peculiarly Darwinian doctrine of descent or development of kind from kind with structure modified and complicated to meet changing circumstances.' (By the way, this is *not* a peculiarly Darwinian doctrine, for it originated with Lamarck, spontaneous variation and selection being the additions made by the English naturalists). But what becomes then of the 'slow processes of adaptation' and the 'ultra-Darwinian theory' spoken of just before?

We must not omit to notice a hypothesis by which Empedocles sought to elucidate the mechanism of sensation, and which was subsequently adopted by the atomic school; indeed, as will presently be shown, we have reason to believe that the whole atomic theory was developed out of it. He held that emanations were being continually thrown off from the surfaces of bodies, and that they penetrated into the organs of sense through fine passages or pores. This may seem a crude guess, but it is at any rate much more scientific than Aristotle's explanation. According to the latter, possibilities of feeling are converted into actualities by the presence of an object. In other words, we feel when and because we do; a safe assertion, but hardly an addition to our positive knowledge of the subject.

We have seen how Greek thought had arrived at a perfectly just conception of the process by which all physical transformations are effected. The whole extended universe is an aggregate of bodies, while each single body is formed by a combination of everlasting elements, and is destroyed by their separation. But if Empedocles was right, if these primary substances were no other than the fire, air, water, and earth of everyday experience, what became of the Heracleitean law, confirmed by common observation, that, so far from remaining unaltered, they were continually passing into one another? To this question the atomic theory gave an answer so conclusive, that, although ignored or contemned by later schools, it was revived with the great revival of science in the sixteenth century, was successfully employed in the explanation of every order of phenomena, and still remains the basis of all physical enquiry. The undulatory theory of light, the law of universal gravitation, and the laws of chemical combination can only be expressed in terms implying the existence of atoms; the laws of gaseous diffusion, and of thermodynamics generally, can only be understood with their help; and the latest develop-

ments of chemistry have tended still further to establish their reality, as well as to elucidate their remarkable properties. In the absence of sufficient information, it is difficult to determine by what steps this admirable hypothesis was evolved. Yet, even without external evidence, we may fairly conjecture that, sooner or later, some philosopher, possessed of a high generalising faculty, would infer that if bodies are continually throwing off a flux of infinitesimal particles from their surfaces, they must be similarly subdivided all through; and that if the organs of sense are honeycombed with imperceptible pores, such may also be the universal constitution of matter.[1] Now, according to Aristotle, Leucippus, the founder of atomism, did actually use the second of these arguments, and employed it in particular to prove the existence of indivisible solids.[2] Other considerations equally obvious suggested themselves from another quarter. If all change was expressible in terms of matter and motion, then gradual change implied interstitial motion, which again involved the necessity of fine pores to serve as channels for the incoming and outgoing molecular streams. Nor, as was supposed, could motion of any kind be conceived without a vacuum, the second great postulate of the atomic theory. Here its advocates directly joined issue with Parmenides. The chief of the Eleatic school had, as we have seen, presented being under the form of a homogeneous sphere, absolutely continuous but limited in extent. Space dissociated from matter was to him, as afterwards to Aristotle, non-existent and impossible. It was, he exclaimed, inconceivable, nonsensical. Unhappily inconceivability is about the worst negative criterion of truth ever yet invented. His challenge was now

[1] By a curious coincidence, the atomic constitution of matter still finds its strongest proof in optical phenomena. Light is propagated by transverse waves, and such waves are only possible in a discontinuous medium. But if the luminiferous ether is composed of discrete particles, so also must be the matter which it penetrates in all directions.

[2] Ar. *De Gen. et Corr.*, I., viii., 325, b, 5.

taken up by the Atomists, who boldly affirmed that if non-being meant empty space, it was just as conceivable and just as necessary as being. A further stimulus may have been received from the Pythagorean school, whose doctrines had, just at this time, been systematised and committed to writing by Philolaus, its most eminent disciple. The hard saying that all things were made out of number might be explained and confirmed if the integers were interpreted as material atoms.

It will have been observed that, so far, the merit of originating atomism has been attributed to Leucippus, instead of to the more celebrated Democritus, with whose name it is usually associated. The two were fast friends, and seem always to have worked together in perfect harmony. But Leucippus, although next to nothing is known of his life, was apparently the older man, and from him, so far as we can make out, emanated the great idea, which his brilliant coadjutor carried into every department of enquiry, and set forth in works which are a loss to literature as well as to science, for the poetic splendour of their style was not less remarkable than the encyclopaedic range of their contents. Democritus was born at Abdêra, a Thracian city, 470 B.C., a year before Socrates, and lived to a very advanced age—more than a hundred, according to some accounts. However this may be, he was probably, like most of his great countrymen, possessed of immense vitality. His early manhood was spent in Eastern travel, and he was not a little proud of the numerous countries which he had visited, and the learned men with whom he had conversed. His time was mostly occupied in observing Nature, and in studying mathematics; the sages of Asia and Egypt may have acquainted him with many useful scientific facts, but we have seen that his philosophy was derived from purely Hellenic sources. A few fragments of his numerous writings still survive—the relics of an intellectual Ozymandias. In them are briefly shadowed forth the conceptions which Lucretius, or at least his modern

English interpreters, have made familiar to all educated men and women. Everything is the result of mechanical causation. Infinite worlds are formed by the collision of infinite atoms falling for ever downward through infinite space. No place is left for supernatural agency; nor are the unaided operations of Nature disguised under Olympian appellations. Democritus goes even further than Epicurus in his rejection of the popular mythology. His system provides no interstellar refuge for abdicated gods. He attributed a kind of objective existence to the apparitions seen in sleep, and even a considerable influence for good or for evil, but denied that they were immortal. The old belief in a Divine Power had arisen from their activity and from meteorological phenomena of an alarming kind, but was destitute of any stronger foundation. For his own part, he looked on the fiery spherical atoms as a universal reason or soul of the world, without, however, assigning to them the distinct and commanding position occupied by a somewhat analogous principle in the system which we now proceed to examine, and with which our survey of early Greek thought will most fitly terminate.

V.

Reasons have already been suggested for placing Anaxagoras last in order among the physical philosophers, notwithstanding his priority in point of age to more than one of them. He was born, according to the most credible accounts, 500 B.C., at Clazomenae, an Ionian city, and settled in Athens when twenty years of age. There he spent much the greater part of a long life, illustrating the type of character which Euripides—expressly referring, as is supposed, to the Ionian sage—has described in the following choric lines:

> 'Happy is he who has learned
> To search out the secret of things,
> Not to the townsmen's bane,

Neither for aught that brings
An unrighteous gain.
But the ageless order he sees
Of nature that cannot die,
And the causes whence it springs,
And the how and the why.
Never have thoughts like these
To a deed of dishonour been turned.'[1]

The dishonour was for the townsmen who, in an outbreak of insane fanaticism, drove the blameless truthseeker from his adopted home. Anaxagoras was the intimate companion of Pericles, and Pericles had made many enemies by his domestic as well as by his foreign policy. A coalition of harassed interests and offended prejudices was formed against him. A cry arose that religion and the constitution were in danger. The Athenians had too much good sense to dismiss their great democratic Minister, but they permitted the illustrious statesman's political opponents to strike at him through his friends.[2] Aspasia was saved only by the tears of her lover. Pheidias, the grandest, most spiritual-minded artist of all time, was arrested on a charge of impiety, and died in a prison of the city whose temples were adorned with the imperishable monuments of his religious inspiration. A decree against 'astronomers and atheists' was so evidently aimed at Anaxagoras that the philosopher retired to Lampsacus, where he died at the age of seventy-two, universally admired and revered. Altars dedicated to Reason and Truth were erected in his honour, and for centuries his memory continued to be celebrated by an annual feast.[3] His whole existence had been devoted to science. When asked what made life worth living, he answered, 'The contemplation of the heavens and of the universal cosmic order.' The reply was like a title-page to his works. We can see that specialisation was

[1] Eurip. *Frag. Incert. Fab.*, CXXXVI. Didot, p. 850. [I am indebted for this version to Miss A. M. F. Robinson, the translator of the *Crowned Hippolytus*.]

[2] Curtius, *Griechische Geschichte*, 342–5 (3rd ed.).

[3] Zeller, *op. cit.*, p. 791.

beginning, that the positive sciences were separating themselves from general theories about Nature, and could be cultivated independently of them. A single individual might, indeed, combine philosophy of the most comprehensive kind with a detailed enquiry into some particular order of phenomena, but he could do this without bringing the two studies into any immediate connexion with each other. Such seems to have been the case with Anaxagoras. He was a professional astronomer and also the author of a modified atomic hypothesis. This, from its greater complexity, seems more likely to have been suggested by the purely quantitative conception of Leucippus than to have preceded it in the order of evolution. Democritus, and probably his teacher also, drew a very sharp distinction between what were afterwards called the primary and secondary qualities of matter. Extension and resistance alone had a real existence in Nature, while the attributes corresponding to our special sensations, such as temperature, taste, and colour, were only subjectively, or, as he expressed it, conventionally true. Anaxagoras affirmed no less strongly than his younger contemporaries that the sum of being can neither be increased nor diminished, that all things arise and perish by combination and division, and that bodies are formed out of indestructible elements; like the Atomists, again, he regarded these elementary substances as infinite in number and inconceivably minute; only he considered them as qualitatively distinct, and as resembling on an infinitesimal scale the highest compounds that they build up. Not only were gold, iron, and the other metals formed of homogeneous particles, but such substances as flesh, bone, and blood were, according to him, equally simple, equally decomposable, into molecules of like nature with themselves. Thus, as Aristotle well observes, he reversed the method of Empedocles, and taught that earth, air, fire, and water were really the most complex of all bodies, since they supplied

nourishment to the living tissues, and therefore must contain within themselves the multitudinous variety of units by whose aggregation individualised organic substance is made up.[1] Furthermore, our philosopher held that originally this intermixture had been still more thoroughgoing, all possible qualities being simultaneously present in the smallest particles of matter. The resulting state of chaotic confusion lasted until Nous, or Reason, came and segregated the heterogeneous elements by a process of continuous differentiation leading up to the present arrangement of things. Both Plato and Aristotle have commended Anaxagoras for introducing into speculation the conception of Reason as a cosmic world-ordering power; both have censured him for making so little use of his own great thought, for attributing almost everything to secondary, material, mechanical causes; for not everywhere applying the teleological method; in fact, for not anticipating the Bridgewater Treatises and proving that the world is constructed on a plan of perfect wisdom and goodness. Less fortunate than the Athenians, we cannot purchase the work of Anaxagoras on Nature at an orchestral book-stall for the moderate price of a drachma; but we know enough about its contents to correct the somewhat petulant and superficial criticism of a school perhaps less in sympathy than we are with its author's method of research. Evidently the Clazomenian philosopher did not mean by Reason an ethical force, a power which makes for human happiness or virtue, nor yet a reflecting intelligence, a designer adapting means to ends. To all appearances the Nous was not a spirit in the sense which we attach, or which Aristotle attached to the term. It was, according to Anaxagoras, the subtlest and purest of all things, totally unmixed with other substances, and therefore able to control and bring them into order. This is not how men speak of an immaterial inextended consciousness. The truth is that no

[1] Ar. *De Coelo*, III., iii., 302, a, 28.

amount of physical science could create, although it might lead towards a spiritualistic philosophy. Spiritualism first arose from the sophistic negation of an external world, from the exclusive study of man, from the Socratic search after general definitions. Yet, if Nous originally meant intelligence, how could it lose this primary signification and become identified with a mere mode of matter? The answer is, that Anaxagoras, whose whole life was spent in tracing out the order of Nature, would instinctively think of his own intelligence as a discriminating, identifying faculty; would, consequently, conceive its objective counterpart under the form of a differentiating and integrating power. All preceding thinkers had represented their supreme being under material conditions, either as one element singly or as a sum total where elemental differences were merged. Anaxagoras differed from them chiefly by the very sharp distinction drawn between his informing principle and the rest of Nature. The absolute intermixture of qualities which he presupposes bears a very strong resemblance both to the Sphairos of Empedocles and to the fiery consummation of Heracleitus, it may even have been suggested by them. Only, what with them was the highest form of existence becomes with him the lowest; thought is asserting itself more and more, and interpreting the law of evolution in accordance with its own imperious demands.

A world where ordering reason was not only raised to supreme power, but also jealously secluded from all communion with lower forms of existence, meant to popular imagination a world from which divinity had been withdrawn. The astronomical teaching of Anaxagoras was well calculated to increase a not unfounded alarm. Underlying the local tribal mythology of Athens and of Greece generally, was an older, deeper Nature-worship, chiefly directed towards those heavenly luminaries which shone so graciously on all men, and to which all men yielded, or were supposed to yield,

grateful homage in return. *Securus judicat orbis terrarum.* Every Athenian citizen from Nicias to Strepsiades would feel his own belief strengthened by such a universal concurrence of authority. Two generations later, Plato held fast to the same conviction, severely denouncing its impugners, whom he would, if possible, have silenced with the heaviest penalties. To Aristotle, also, the heavenly bodies were something far more precious and perfect than anything in our sublunary sphere, something to be spoken of only in language of enthusiastic and passionate love. At a far later period Marcus Aurelius could refer to them as visible gods ;[1] and just before the final extinction of Paganism highly-educated men still offered up their orisons in silence and secresy to the moon.[2] Judge, then, with what horror an orthodox public received Anaxagoras's announcement that the moon shone only by reflected light, that she was an earthy body, and that her surface was intersected with mountains and ravines, besides being partially built over. The bright Selênê, the Queen of Heaven, the most interesting and sympathetic of goddesses, whose phases so vividly recalled the course of human life, who was firmly believed to bring fine weather at her return and to take it away at her departure, was degraded into a cold, dark, senseless clod.[3] Democritus observed that all this had been known a long time in the Eastern countries where he had travelled. Possibly ; but fathers of families could not have been more disturbed if it had been a brand-new discovery. The sun, too, they were told, was a red-hot stone larger than Peloponnesus—a somewhat unwieldy size even for a Homeric god. Socrates, little as he cared about physical investigations generally, took this theory very seriously to heart, and

[1] M. Antoninus, XII., 28.

[2] Zeller, *Ph. d. Gr.*, III., b, p. 669.

[3] Even regulating the calendar by the sun instead of by the moon seems to have been regarded as a dangerous and impious innovation by the more conservative Athenians—at least judging from the half-serious pleasantry of Aristophanes, *Nub.*, 608-26. (Dindorf.)

attempted to show by a series of distinctions that sun-heat and fire-heat were essentially different from each other. A duller people than the Athenians would probably have shown far less suspicion of scientific innovations. Men who were accustomed to anticipate the arguments of an orator before they were half out of his month, with whom the extraction of reluctant admissions by cross-examination was habitually used as a weapon of attack and defence in the public law courts and practised as a game in private circles—who were perpetually on their guard against insidious attacks from foreign and domestic foes—had minds ready trained to the work of an inquisitorial priesthood. An Athenian, moreover, had mythology at his fingers' ends; he was accustomed to see its leading incidents placed before him on the stage not only with intense realism, but with a systematic adaptation to the demands of common experience and a careful concatenation of cause and effect, which gave his belief in them all the force of a rational conviction while retaining all the charm of a supernatural creed. Then, again, the constitution of Athens, less than that of any other Greek State, could be worked without the devoted, self-denying co-operation of her citizens, and in their minds sense of duty was inseparably associated with religious belief, based in its turn on mythological traditions. A great poet has said, and said truly, that Athens was 'on the will of man as on a mount of diamond set,' but the crystallising force which gave that collective human will such clearness and keenness and tenacity was faith in the protecting presence of a diviner Will at whose withdrawal it would have crumbled into dust. Lastly, the Athenians had no genius for natural science; none of them were ever distinguished as savans. They looked on the new knowledge much as Swift looked on it two thousand years afterwards. It was, they thought, a miserable trifling waste of time, not productive of any practical good, breeding conceit in young men, and quite unworthy of receiving any attention from orators, soldiers, and

statesmen. Pericles, indeed, thought differently, but Pericles was as much beyond his age when he talked about Nature with Anaxagoras as when he charged Aspasia with the government of his household and the entertainment of his guests.

These reflections are offered, not in excuse but in explanation of Athenian intolerance, a phenomenon for the rest unparalleled in ancient Greece. We cannot say that men were then, or ever have been, logically obliged to choose between atheism and superstition. If instead of using Nous as a half-contemptuous nickname for the Clazomenian stranger, his contemporaries had taken the trouble to understand what Nous really meant, they might have found in it the possibility of a deep religious significance; they might have identified it with all that was best and purest in their own guardian goddess Athênê; have recognised it as the very foundation of their own most characteristic excellences. But vast spiritual revolutions are not so easily accomplished; and when, before the lapse of many years, Nous was again presented to the Athenian people, this time actually personified as an Athenian citizen, it was again misunderstood, again rejected, and became the occasion for a display of the same persecuting spirit, unhappily pushed to a more fatal extreme.

Under such unfavourable auspices did philosophy find a home in Athens. The great maritime capital had drawn to itself every other species of intellectual eminence, and this could not fail to follow with the rest. But philosophy, although hitherto identified with mathematical and physical science, held unexhausted possibilities of development in reserve. According to a well-known legend, Thales once fell into a tank while absorbed in gazing at the stars. An old woman advised him to look at the tank in future, for there he would see the water and the stars as well. Others after him had got into similar difficulties, and might seek to evade them by a similar artifice. While busied with the study of

cosmic evolution, they had stumbled unawares on some perplexing mental problems. Why do the senses suggest beliefs so much at variance with those arrived at by abstract reasoning? Why should reason be more trustworthy than sense? Why are the foremost Hellenic thinkers so hopelessly disagreed? What is the criterion of truth? Of what use are conclusions which cannot command universal assent? Or, granting that truth is discoverable, how can it be communicated to others? Such were some of the questions now beginning urgently to press for a solution. 'I sought for myself,' said Heracleitus in his oracular style. His successors had to do even more—to seek not only for themselves but for others; to study the beliefs, habits, and aptitudes of their hearers with profound sagacity, in order to win admission for the lessons they were striving to impart. And when a systematic investigation of human nature had once begun, it could not stop short with a mere analysis of the intellectual faculties; what a man did was after all so very much more important than what he knew, was, in truth, that which alone gave his knowledge any practical value whatever. Moral distinctions, too, were beginning to grow uncertain. When every other traditional belief had been shaken to its foundations, when men were taught to doubt the evidence of their own senses, it was not to be expected that the conventional laws of conduct, at no time very exact or consistent, would continue to be accepted on the authority of ancient usage. Thus, every kind of determining influences, internal and external, conspired to divert philosophy from the path which it had hitherto pursued, and to change it from an objective, theoretical study into an introspective, dialectic, practical discipline.

VI.

And now, looking back at the whole course of early Greek thought, presenting as it does a gradual development and an

organic unity which prove it to be truly a native growth, a spontaneous product of the Greek mind, let us take one step further and enquire whether before the birth of pure speculation, or parallel with but apart from its rudimentary efforts, there were not certain tendencies displayed in the other great departments of intellectual activity, fixed forms as it were in which the Hellenic genius was compelled to work, which reproduce themselves in philosophy and determine its distinguishing characteristics. Although the materials for a complete Greek ethology are no longer extant, it can be shown that such tendencies did actually exist.

It is a familiar fact, first brought to light by Lessing, and generalised by him into a law of all good literary composition, that Homer always throws his descriptions into a narrative form. We are not told what a hero wore, but how he put on his armour; when attention is drawn to a particular object we are made acquainted with its origin and past history; even the reliefs on a shield are invested with life and movement. Homer was not impelled to adopt this method either by conscious reflection or by a profound poetic instinct. At a certain stage of intellectual development, every Greek would find it far easier to arrange the data of experience in successive than in contemporaneous order; the one is fixed, the other admits of indefinite variation. Pictorial and plastic art also begin with serial presentations, and only arrive at the construction of large centralised groups much later on. We have next to observe that, while Greek reflection at first followed the order of time, it turned by preference not to present or future, but to past time. Nothing in Hellenic literature reminds us of Hebrew prophecy. To a Greek all distinct prevision was merged in the gloom of coming death or the glory of anticipated fame. Of course, at every great crisis of the national fortunes much curiosity prevailed among the vulgar as to what course events would take; but it was sedulously discouraged by the noblest minds. Herodotus and

Sophocles look on even divine predictions as purposely ambiguous and misleading. Pindar often dwells on the hopeless uncertainty of life.[1] Thucydides treats all vaticination as utterly delusive. So, when a belief in the soul's separate existence first obtained acceptance among the Greeks, it interested them far less as a pledge of never-ending life and progress hereafter, than as involving a possible revelation of past history, of the wondrous adventures which each individual had passed through before assuming his present form. Hence the peculiar force of Pindar's congratulation to the partaker in the Eleusinian mysteries; after death he knows not only 'the end of life,' but also 'its god-given beginning.'[2] Even the present was not intelligible until it had been projected back into the past, or interpreted by the light of some ancient tale. Sappho, in her famous ode to Aphroditê, recalls the incidents of a former passion precisely similar to the unrequited love which now agitates her heart, and describes at length how the goddess then came to her relief as she is now implored to come again. Modern critics have spoken of this curious literary artifice as a sign of delicacy and reserve. We may be sure that Sappho was an utter stranger to such feelings; she ran her thoughts into a predetermined mould just as a bee builds its wax into hexagonal cells. Curtius, the German historian, has surmised with much plausibility that the entire legend of Troy owes its origin to this habit of throwing back contemporary events into a distant past. According to his view, the characters and scenes recorded by Homer, although unhistorical as they now stand, had really a place in the Achaean colonisation of Asia Minor.[3] But, apart from any disguised allusions, old stories had an inexhaustible charm for the Greek imagination. Even during the stirring events of the Peloponnesian war, elderly Athenian

[1] σύμβολον δ' οὔ πώ τις ἐπιχθονίων
πιστὸν ἀμφὶ πράξιος ἐσσομένας εὗρεν θεόθεν.—*Ol.*, XII., 8–9.

[2] *Frag.*, 102.

[3] *Griechische Geschichte*, ii., 112–3 (3rd ed.).

citizens in their hours of relaxation talked of nothing but mythology.[1] When a knowledge of reading became universally diffused, and books could be had at a moderate price, ancient legends seem to have been the favourite literature of the lower classes, just as among ourselves in Caxton's time. Still more must the same taste have prevailed a century earlier. A student who opens Pindar's epinician odes for the first time is surprised to find so little about the victorious combatants and the struggles in which they took part, so much about mythical adventures seemingly unconnected with the ostensible subject of the poem. Furthermore, we find that genealogies were the framework by which these distant recollections were held together. Most noble families traced their descent back to a god or to a god-like hero. The entire interval separating the historical period from the heroic age was filled up with more or less fictitious pedigrees. A man's ancestry was much the most important part of his biography. It is likely that Herodotus had just as enthusiastic an admiration as we can have for Leonidas. Yet one fancies that a historian of later date would have shown his appreciation of the Spartan king in a rather different fashion. We should have been told something about the hero's personal appearance, and perhaps some characteristic incidents from his earlier career would have been related. Not so with Herodotus. He pauses in the story of Thermopylae to give us the genealogy of Leonidas up to Heraclês; no more and no less. That was the highest compliment he could pay, and it is repeated for Pausanias, the victor of Plataea.[2] The genealogical method was capable of wide extension, and could be applied to other than human or animal relationships. Hesiod's Theogony is a genealogy of heaven and earth, and all that in them is. According to Aeschylus, gain is bred from gain, slaughter from slaughter, woe from woe. Insolence bears a child like unto herself, and this in turn gives birth to

[1] Aristophanes, *Vesp.*, 1176. [2] Herod., VII., 204; IX., 64.

a still more fatal progeny.[1] The same poet terminates his enumeration of the flaming signals that sped the message of victory from Troy to Argos, by describing the last beacon as 'not ungrandsired by the Idaean fire.'[2] Now, when the Greek genius had begun to move in any direction, it rushed forward without pausing until arrested by an impassable limit, and then turned back to retraverse at leisure the whole interval separating that limit from its point of departure. Thus, the ascending lines of ancestry were followed up until they led to a common father of all; every series of outrages was traced through successive reprisals back to an initial crime; and more generally every event was affiliated to a preceding event, until the whole chain had been attached to an ultimate self-existing cause. Hence the records of origination, invention, spontaneity were long sought after with an eagerness which threw almost every other interest into the shade. 'Glory be to the inventor,' sings Pindar, in his address to victorious Corinth; 'whence came the graces of the dithyrambic hymn, who first set the double eagle on the temples of the gods?'[3] The *Prometheus* of Aeschylus tells how civilisation began, and the trilogy to which it belongs was probably intended to show how the supremacy of Zeus was first established and secured. A great part of the *Agamemnon* deals with events long anterior to the opening of the drama, but connected as ultimate causes with the terrible catastrophe which it represents. In the *Eumenides* we see how the family, as it now exists, was first constituted by the substitution of paternal for maternal headship, and also how the worship of the Avenging Goddesses was first introduced into Athens, as well as how the Areopagite tribunal was founded. It is very probable that Sophocles's earliest work, the *Triptolemus*, represented the origin of agriculture under a dramatic form; and if the same poet's later pieces, as well as all those of Euripides,

[1] *Agam.*, 750–71. [2] *Ib.*, 311.
[3] *Ol.*, XIII, 17 (Donaldson).

stand on quite different ground, occupied as they are with subjects of contemporaneous, or rather of eternal interest, we must regard this as a proof that the whole current of Greek thought had taken a new direction, corresponding to that simultaneously impressed on philosophy by Socrates and the Sophists. We may note further that the Aeginetan sculptures, executed soon after Salamis, though evidently intended to commemorate that victory, represent a conflict waged long before by the tutelary heroes of Aegina against an Asiatic foe. We may also see in our own British Museum how the birth of Athênê was recorded in a marble group on one pediment of the Parthenon, and the foundation of her chosen city on the other. The very temple which these majestic sculptures once adorned was a petrified memorial of antiquity, and, by the mere form of its architecture, must have carried back men's thoughts to the earliest Hellenic habitation, the simple structure in which a gabled roof was supported by cross-beams on a row of upright wooden posts.

Turning back once more from art and literature to philosophy, is it not abundantly clear that if the Greeks speculated at all, they must at first have speculated according to some such method as that which history proves them to have actually followed? They must have begun by fixing their thoughts, as Thales and his successors did, on the world's remotest past; they must have sought for a first cause of things, and conceived it, not as any spiritual power, but as a kind of natural ancestor homogeneous with the forms which issued from it, although greater and more comprehensive than they were; in short, as an elemental body—water, air, fire, or, more vaguely, as an infinite substance. Did not the steady concatenation of cause and effect resemble the unrolling of a heroic genealogy? And did not the reabsorption of every individual existence in a larger whole translate into more general terms that subordination of personal to family and civic glory which is the diapason of Pindar's music?

Nor was this all. Before philosophising, the Greeks did not think only in the order of time; they learned at a very early period to think also in the order of space, their favourite idea of a limit being made especially prominent here. Homer's geographical notions, however erroneous, are, for his age, singularly well defined. Aeschylus has a wide knowledge of the earth's surface, and exhibits it with perhaps unnecessary readiness. Pindar delights to follow his mythological heroes about on their travels. The same tendency found still freer scope when prose literature began. Hecataeus, one of the earliest prose-writers, was great both as a genealogist and as a geographer; and in this respect also Herodotus carried out on a great scale the enquiries most habitually pursued by his countrymen. Now, it will be remembered that we have had occasion to characterise early Ionian speculation as being, to a great extent, cosmography. The element from which it deduced all things was, in fact, that which was supposed to lie outside and embrace the rest. The geographical limit was conceived as a genealogical ancestor. Thus, the studies which men like Hecataeus carried on separately, were combined, or rather confused, in a single bold generalisation by Anaximenes and Heracleitus.

Yet, however much may be accounted for by these considerations, they still leave something enexplained. Why should one thinker after another so unhesitatingly assume that the order of Nature as we know it has issued not merely from a different but from an exactly opposite condition, from universal confusion and chaos? Their experience was far too limited to tell them anything about those vast cosmic changes which we know by incontrovertible evidence to have already occurred, and to be again in course of preparation. We can only answer this question by bringing into view what may be called the negative moment of Greek thought. The science of contraries is one, says Aristotle, and it certainly was so to his countrymen. Not only did they delight

to bring together the extremes of weal and woe, of pride and abasement, of security and disaster, but whatever they most loved and clung to in reality seemed to interest their imagination most powerfully by its removal, its reversal, or its overthrow. The Athenians were peculiarly intolerant of regal government and of feminine interference in politics. In Athenian tragedy the principal actors are kings and royal ladies. The Athenian matrons occupied a position of exceptional dignity and seclusion. They are brought upon the comic stage to be covered with the coarsest ridicule, and also to interfere decisively in the conduct of public affairs. Aristophanes was profoundly religious himself, and wrote for a people whose religion, as we have seen, was pushed to the extreme of bigotry. Yet he shows as little respect for the gods as for the wives and sisters of his audience. To take a more general example still, the whole Greek tragic drama is based on the idea of family kinship, and that institution was made most interesting to Greek spectators by the violation of its eternal sanctities, by unnatural hatred, and still more unnatural love; or by a fatal misconception which causes the hands of innocent persons, more especially of tender women, to be armed against their nearest and dearest relatives in utter unconsciousness of the awful guilt about to be incurred. By an extension of the same psychological law to abstract speculation we are enabled to understand how an early Greek philosopher who had come to look on Nature as a cosmos, an orderly whole, consisting of diverse but connected and interdependent parts, could not properly grasp such a conception until he had substituted for it one of a precisely opposite character, out of which he reconstructed it by a process of gradual evolution. And if it is asked how in the first place did he come by the idea of a cosmos, our answer must be that he found it in Greek life, in societies distinguished by a many-sided but harmonious development of concurrent functions, and by

voluntary obedience to an impersonal law. Thus, then, the circle is complete ; we have returned to our point of departure, and again recognise in Greek philosophy a systematised expression of the Greek national genius.

We must now bring this long and complicated, but it is hoped not uninteresting, study to a close. We have accompanied philosophy to a point where it enters on a new field, and embraces themes sufficiently important to form the subject of a separate chapter. The contributions made by its first cultivators to our positive knowledge have already been summarised. It remains to mention that there was nothing of a truly transcendental character about their speculations. Whatever extension we may give to that terrible bugbear, the Unknowable, they did not trespass on its domain. Heracleitus and his compeers, while penetrating far beyond the horizon of their age and country, kept very nearly within the limits of a possible experience. They confused some conceptions which we have learned to distinguish, and separated others which we have learned to combine; but they were the lineal progenitors of our highest scientific thought; and they first broke ground on a path where we must continue to advance, if the cosmos which they won for us is not to be let lapse into chaos and darkness again.

CHAPTER II.

THE GREEK HUMANISTS: NATURE AND LAW.

I.

In the preceding chapter we traced the rise and progress of physical philosophy among the ancient Greeks. We showed how a few great thinkers, borne on by an unparalleled development of intellectual activity, worked out ideas respecting the order of nature and the constitution of matter which, after more than two thousand years, still remain as fresh and fruitful as ever; and we found that, in achieving these results, Greek thought was itself determined by ascertainable laws. Whether controlling artistic imagination or penetrating to the objective truth of things, it remained always essentially homogeneous, and worked under the same forms of circumscription, analysis, and opposition. It began with external nature, and with a far distant past; nor could it begin otherwise, for only so could the subjects of its later meditations be reached. Only after less sacred beliefs have been shaken can ethical dogmas be questioned. Only when discrepancies of opinion obtrude themselves on man's notice is the need of an organising logic experienced. And the mind's eye, originally focussed for distant objects alone, has to be gradually restricted in its range by the pressure of accumulated experience before it can turn from past to present, from successive to contemporaneous phenomena. We have now to undertake the not less interesting task of showing how the new culture, the new conceptions, the new power to think obtained through those earliest

speculations, reacted on the life from which they sprang, transforming the moral, religious, and political creeds of Hellas, and preparing, as nothing else could prepare, the vaster revolution which has given a new dignity to existence, and substituted, in however imperfect a form, for the adoration of animalisms which lie below man, the adoration of an ideal which rises above him, but only personifies the best elements of his own nature, and therefore is possible for a perfected humanity to realise.

While most educated persons will admit that the Greeks are our masters in science and literature, in politics and art, some even among those who are free from theological prejudices will not be prepared to grant that the principles which claim to guide our conduct are only a wider extension or a more specific application of Greek ethical teaching. Hebraism has been opposed to Hellenism as the educating power whence our love of righteousness is derived, and which alone prevents the foul orgies of a primitive nature-worship from being still celebrated in the midst of our modern civilisation. And many look on old Roman religion as embodying a sense of duty higher than any bequeathed to us by Greece. The Greeks have, indeed, suffered seriously from their own sincerity. Their literature is a perfect image of their life, reflecting every blot and every flaw, unveiled, uncoloured, undisguised. It was, most fortunately, never subjected to the revision of a jealous priesthood, bent on removing every symptom inconsistent with the hypothesis of a domination exercised by themselves through all the past. Nor yet has their history been systematically falsified to prove that they never wrongfully attacked a neighbour, and were invariably obliged to conquer in self-defence. Still, even taking the records as they stand, it is to Greek rather than to Hebrew or Roman annals that we must look for examples of true virtue; and in Greek literature, earlier than in any other, occur precepts like those which are now held to be most distinctively character-

istic of Christian ethics. Let us never forget that only by Stoical teaching was the narrow and cruel formalism of ancient Roman law elevated into the 'written reason' of the imperial jurists; only after receiving successive infiltrations of Greek thought was the ethnic monotheism of Judaea expanded into a cosmopolitan religion. Our popular theologians are ready enough to admit that Hellenism was providentially the means of giving Christianity a world-wide diffusion; they ignore the fact that it gave the new faith not only wings to fly, but also eyes to see and a soul to love. From very early times there was an intuition of humanity in Hellas which only needed dialectical development to become an all-sufficient law of life. Homer sympathises ardently with his own countrymen, but he never vilifies their enemies. He did not, nor did any Greek, invent impure legends to account for the origin of hostile tribes whose kinship could not be disowned; unlike Samuel, he regards the sacrifice of prisoners with unmixed abhorrence. What would he, whose Odysseus will not allow a shout of triumph to be raised over the fallen, have said to Deborah's exultation at the murder of a suppliant fugitive? Courage was, indeed, with him the highest virtue, and Greek literature abounds in martial spirit-stirring tones, but it is nearly always by the necessities of self-defence that this enthusiasm is invoked; with Pindar and Simonides, with Aeschylus and Sophocles, it is resistance to an invader that we find so proudly commemorated; and the victories which make Greek history so glorious were won in fighting to repel an unjust aggression perpetrated either by the barbarians or by a tyrant state among the Greeks themselves. There was, as will be shown hereafter, an unhappy period when right was either denied, or, what comes to the same thing, identified with might; but this offensive paradox only served to waken true morality into a more vivid self-consciousness, and into the felt need of discovering for itself a stronger foundation than usage and tradition, a loftier

sanction than mere worldly success could afford. The most universal principle of justice, to treat others as we should wish to be treated ourselves, seems before the Rabbi Hillel's time to have become almost a common-place of Greek ethics;[1] difficulties left unsolved by the Book of Job were raised to a higher level by Greek philosophy; and long before St. Paul, a Plato reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.

No one will deny that the life of the Greeks was stained with foul vices, and that their theory sometimes fell to the level of their practice. No one who believes that moral truth, like all truth, has been gradually discovered, will wonder at this phenomenon. If moral conduct is a function of social life, then, like other functions, it will be subject, not only to growth, but also to disease and decay. An intense and rapid intellectual development may have for its condition a totally abnormal state of society, where certain vices, unknown to ruder ages, spring up and flourish with rank luxuriance. When men have to take women along with them on every new path of enquiry, progress will be considerably retarded, although its benefits will ultimately be shared among a greater number, and will be better insured against the danger of a violent reaction. But the work that Hellas was commissioned to perform could not wait; it had to be accomplished in a few generations, or not at all. The barbarians were forcing their way in on every side, not merely with the weight of invading armies, but with the deadlier pressure of a benumbing superstition, with the brute-worship of Egypt and the devil-worship of Phoenicia, with

[1] 'Thou shalt not take that which is mine, and may I do to others as I would that they should do to me' (Plato, *Legg.*, 913, A. Jowett's Transl., vol. V., p. 483). Isocrates makes a king addressing his governors say: 'You should be to others what you think I should be to you' (*Nicocles*, 49). And again: 'Do not to others what it makes you angry to suffer yourselves' (*Ibid.*, 61). A similar observation is attributed to Thales, doubtless by an anachronism (Diogenes Laertius, I., i., 36).

their delirious orgies, their mutilations, their crucifixions, and their gladiatorial contests. Already in the later dramas of Euripides and in the Rhodian school of sculpture, we see the awful shadow coming nearer, and feel the poisonous breath of Asia on our faces. Reason, the reason by which these terrors have been for ever exorcised, could only arrive at maturity under the influence of free and uninterrupted discussion carried on by men among themselves in the gymnasium, the agora, the ecclêsia, and the dicastery. The resulting and inevitable separation of the sexes bred frightful disorders, which through all changes of creed have clung like a moral pestilence to the shores of the Aegean, and have helped to complicate political problems by joining to religious hatred the fiercer animosity of physical disgust. But whatever were the corruptions of Greek sentiment, Greek philosophy had the power to purge them away. 'Follow nature' became the watchword of one school after another; and a precept which at first may have meant only that man should not fall below the brutes, was finally so interpreted as to imply an absolute control of sense by reason. No loftier standard of sexual purity has ever been inculcated than that fixed by Plato in his latest work, the *Laws*. Isocrates bids husbands set an example of conjugal fidelity to their wives. Socrates had already declared that virtue was the same for both sexes. Xenophon interests himself in the education of women. Plato would give them the same training, and everywhere associate them in the same functions with men. Equally decisive evidence of a theoretical opposition to slavery is not forthcoming, and we know that it was unfortunately sanctioned by Plato and Aristotle, in this respect no better inspired than the early Christians; nevertheless, the germ of such an opposition existed, and will hereafter be pointed out.

It has been said that the Greeks only worshipped beauty; that they cultivated morality from the aesthetic side; that

virtue was with them a question, not of duty, but of taste. Some very strong texts might be quoted in support of this judgment. For example, we find Isocrates saying, in his encomium on Helen, that 'Beauty is the first of all things in majesty, and honour, and divineness. It is easy to see its power: there are many things which have no share of courage, or wisdom, or justice, which yet will be found honoured above things which have each of these, but nothing which is devoid of beauty is prized; all things are scorned which have not been given their part of that attribute; the admiration for virtue itself comes to this, that of all manifestations of life virtue is the most *beautiful*.'[1] And Aristotle distinguishes the highest courage as willingness to die for the καλόν. So also Plato describes philosophy as a love 'that leads one from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is. And this is that life beyond all others which man should live in the contemplation of beauty absolute.'[2] Now, first of all, we must observe that, while loveliness has been worshipped by many others, none have conceived it under a form so worthy of worship as the Greeks. Beauty with them was neither little, nor fragile, nor voluptuous; the soul's energies were not relaxed but exalted by its comtemplation; there was in it an element of austere and commanding dignity. The Argive Hêrê, though revealed to us only through a softened Italian copy, has more divinity in her countenance than any Madonna of them all; and the Melian Aphroditê is distinguished by majesty of form not less than by purity and sweetness of expression. This beauty was the unreserved information of matter by mind, the visible rendering of absolute power, wisdom, and goodness. Therefore, what a Greek wor-

[1] We gladly avail ourselves of the masterly translation given by Prof. Jebb. The whole of this splendid passage will be found in his *Attic Orators*, vol. II., pp. 78–79.

[2] *Symposium*, 211, C; Jowett's Transl., vol. II.

shipped was the perpetual and ever-present energising of mind; but he forgot that beauty can only exist as a combination of spirit with sense; and, after detaching the higher element, he continued to call it by names and clothe it in attributes proper to its earthly manifestations alone. Yet such an extension of the aesthetic sentiment involved no weakening of the moral fibre. A service comprehending all idealisms in one demanded the self-effacement of a laborious preparation and the self-restraint of a gradual achievement. They who pitched the goal of their aspiration so high, knew that the paths leading up to it were rough, and steep, and long; they felt that perfect workmanship and perfect taste, being supremely precious, must be supremely difficult as well; χαλεπὰ τὰ καλά they said, the beautiful is hard—hard to judge, hard to win, and hard to keep. He who has passed through that stern discipline need tremble at no other task; nor has duty anything to fear from a companionship whose ultimate requirements are coincident with her own, and the abandonment of which for a joyless asceticism can only lead to the reappearance as an invading army of forces that should have been cherished as indispensable allies.

It may be urged that beauty, however difficult of attainment or severe in form, is, after all, essentially superficial; and that a morality elaborated on the same principles will be equally superficial—will, in fact, be little more than the art of keeping up appearances, of displaying fine sentiments, of avoiding those actions the consequences of which are immediately felt to be disagreeable, and, above all, of not needlessly wounding anyone's sensibilities. Such an imitation of morality—which it would be a mistake to call hypocrisy—has no doubt been common enough among all civilised nations; but there is no reason to believe that it was in any way favoured by the circumstances of Greek life. There is even evidence of a contrary tendency, as, indeed, might be expected among a people whose most important states were saved from the corrupt-

ing influences of a court. Where the sympathetic admiration of shallow and excitable spectators is the effect chiefly sought after, the showy virtues will be preferred to the solid, and the appearance to the reality of all virtue; while brilliant and popular qualities will be allowed to atone for the most atrocious crimes. But, among the Greeks of the best period, courage and generosity rank distinctly lower than temperance and justice; their poets and moralists alike inculcate the preference of substance to show; and in no single instance, so far as we can judge, did they, as modern nations often do, for the sake of great achievements condone great wrongs. It was said of a Greek and by a Greek that he did not wish to seem but to be just.[1] We follow the judgment of the Greeks themselves in preferring Leonidas to Pausanias, Aristeides to Themistocles, and Socrates to Alcibiades. And we need only compare Epameinondas with David or Pericles with Solomon as national heroes, to perceive at once how much nearer the two Greeks come to our own standard of perfection, and how futile are the charges sometimes brought against those from whose traditions we have inherited their august and stainless fame.

Moreover, we have not here to consider what was the average level of sentiment and practice among the Greeks; we have to study what alone was of importance for the races which came under their tuition, and that is the highest moral judgment to which they rose. Now, the deliberate verdict of their philosophy on the relation between beauty and virtue is contained in the following passage from Plato's *Laws*:—

'When anyone prefers beauty to virtue, what is this but the real and utter dishonour of the soul? For such a preference implies that the body is more honourable than the soul; and this is false, for there is nothing of earthly birth which is more honourable than the heavenly, and he who thinks otherwise of the soul has no idea how greatly he undervalues this wonderful possession.'[2]

[1] Aesch., *Sep. con. Theb.*, 592.

[2] *Legg.*, 727, E; Jowett's Transl., V, 299.

II.

Thus much for the current prejudices which seemed likely to interfere with a favourable consideration of our subject. We have next to study the conditions by which the form of Greek ethical philosophy was originally determined. Foremost among these must be placed the moral conceptions already current long before systematic reflection could begin. What they were may be partly gathered from some wise saws attributed by the Greeks themselves to their Seven Sages, but probably current at a much earlier period. The pith of these maxims, taken collectively, is to recommend the qualities attributed by our own philosophic poet to his perfect woman :—

> 'The reason firm, the temperate will,
> Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill.'

We may say almost as briefly that they inculcate complete independence both of our own passions and of external circumstances, with a corresponding respect for the independence of others, to be shown by using persuasion instead of force. Their tone will perhaps be best understood by contrast with that collection of Hebrew proverbs which has come down to us under the name of Solomon, but which Biblical critics now attribute to a later period and a divided authorship. While these regularly put forward material prosperity as the chief motive to good conduct, Hellenic wisdom teaches indifference to the variations of fortune. To a Greek, 'the power that makes for righteousness,' so far from being 'not ourselves,' was our own truest self, the far-seeing reason which should guard us from elation and from depression, from passion and from surprise. Instead of being offered old age as a reward, we are told to be equally prepared for a long and for a short life.

Two precepts stand out before all others, which, trivial as they may seem, are uttered from the very soul of Greek

experience, 'Be moderate,' and, 'Know thyself.' Their joint observance constitutes the characteristic virtue of Sôphrosynê, which means all that we understand by temperance, and a great deal more besides; so much, in fact, that very clever Greeks were hard set to define it, and very wise Greeks could pray for it as the fairest gift of the gods.[1] Let us suppose that each individual has a sphere of activity marked out for him by his own nature and his special environment; then to discern clearly the limits of that sphere and to keep within them would be Sôphrosynê, while the discernment, taken alone, would be wisdom. The same self-restraint operating as a check on interference with other spheres would be justice; while the expansive force by which a man fills up his entire sphere and guards it against aggressions may be called courage. Thus we are enabled to comprehend the many-sided significance of Sôphrosynê, to see how it could stand both for a particular virtue and for all virtuousness whatever. We need only glance at Homer's poems, and in particular at the *Iliad*—a much deeper as well as a more brilliant work than the *Odyssey*—to perceive how very early this demand for moderation combined with self-knowledge had embodied itself in Greek thought. Agamemnon violates the rights of Achilles under the influence of immoderate passion, and through ignorance of how little we can accomplish without the hero's assistance. Achilles, again, carries his vindictiveness too far, and suffers in consequence. But his self-knowledge is absolutely perfect; conscious that he is first in the field while others are better in council, he never undertakes a task to which his powers are not fully adequate; nor does he enter on his final work of vengeance without a clear consciousness of the speedy death which its completion will entail on himself. Hector, too, notwithstanding ominous forebodings, knows his duty and does it, but with much less just an estimate of his own powers, leading him to pursue his success too far, and then, when the

[1] See Plato's *Charmides*; and Euripides' *Medea*, 635 (Dindorf).

tide has turned, not permitting him to make a timely retreat within the walls of Troy. So with the secondary characters. Patroclus also oversteps the limits of moderation, and pays the penalty with his life. Diomed silently bears the unmerited rebuke of Agamemnon, but afterwards recalls it at a most effective moment, when rising to oppose the craven counsels of the great king. This the Greeks called observing opportunity, and opportunism was with them, as with French politicians, a form of moderation.[1] Down at the very bottom of the scale Thersites and Dolon are signal examples of men who do not know their sphere and suffer for their folly. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is a nearly perfect type of wisdom joined with self-control, erring, if we remember rightly, only once, when he insults Polyphemus before the ship is out of danger; while his comrades perish from want of these same gifts.

So far, virtue was with the Greeks what it must inevitably be with all men at first, chiefly self-regarding, a refined form of prudence. Moreover, other-regarding virtues gave less scope for reflection, being originally comprehended under obedience to the law. But there were two circumstances which could not long escape their notice; first, that fraud and violence are often, at least apparently, profitable to those who perpetrate them, a fact bitterly remarked by Hesiod;[2] and secondly, that society cannot hold together without justice. It was long before Governments grew up willing and able to protect their subjects from mutual aggressions, nor does positive law create morality, but implies it, and could not be worked without it. Nor could international obligations be enforced by a superior tribunal; hence they have remained down to the present day a fertile theme for ethical discussion. It is at this point that morality forms a junction with religion, the history of which is highly interesting, but which can here be

[1] Pindar uses *καιρός* and *μέτρον* as synonymous terms.

[2] *Opp. et D.*, 271.

only briefly traced. The Olympian divinities, as placed before us by Homer, are anything but moral. Their conduct towards each other is that of a dissolute nobility; towards men it is that of unscrupulous partisans and patrons. A loyal adherence to friends and gratitude for sacrificial offerings are their most respectable characteristics, raising them already a little above the nature-powers whence they were derived. Now, mark how they first become moralised. It is by being made witnesses to an oath. Any one who is called in to testify to a promise feels aggrieved if it is broken, looking on the breach as an insult to his own dignity. As the Third Commandment well puts it, his name has been taken in vain. Thus it happened that the same gods who left every other crime unpunished, visited perjury with severe and speedy retribution, continued even after the offender's death.[1] Respect for a contract is the primary form of moral obligation, and still seems to possess a peculiar hold over uneducated minds. We see every day how many persons will abstain from actions which they know to be immoral because they have given their word to that effect, not because the actions themselves are wrong. And for that reason law courts would be more willing to enforce contracts than to redress injuries. If, then, one person inflicted damage on another, he might afterwards, in order to escape retaliation from the injured party, or from his family, engage to give satisfaction, and the court would compel him to redeem his promise.[2] Thus contract, by procuring redress for every species of wrong, would gradually extend its own obligatory character to abstinence from injury in general, and the divine sanctions primarily invoked on behalf of oaths would be extended, with them, over the whole domain of moral conduct.

Nor was this all. Laws and justice once established would

[1] Hom. *Il.*, IV., 160, 235; VII., 76, 411; XVI., 386. Hes., *Opp. et D.*, 265. These references are copied from Welcker, *Griechische Götterlehre*, I., p. 178, q. v.

[2] See Maine's *Ancient Law*, chap. X., *The Early History of Delict and Crime*.

require to have their origin accounted for, and, according to the usual genealogical method of the early Greeks, would be described as children of the gods, who would thus be interested in their welfare, and would avenge their violation—a stage of reflection already reached in the *Works and Days* of Hesiod.

Again, when oracles like that at Delphi had obtained wide-spread renown and authority, they would be consulted, not only on ceremonial questions and matters of policy, but also on debateable points of morality. The divine responses, being unbiassed by personal interest, would necessarily be given in accordance with received rules of rectitude, and would be backed by all the terrors of a supernatural sanction. It might even be dangerous to assume that the god could possibly give his support to wrong-doing. A story told by Herodotus proves that such actually was the case. There lived once at Sparta a certain man named Glaucus, who had acquired so great a reputation for probity that, during the troublous times of the Persian conquest, a wealthy Milesian thought it advisable to deposit a large sum of money with him for safe keeping. After a considerable time the money was claimed by his children, but the honesty of Glaucus was not proof against temptation. He pretended to have forgotten the whole affair, and required a delay of three months before making up his mind with regard to the validity of their demand. During that interval he consulted the Delphic oracle to know whether he might possess himself of the money by a false oath. The answer was that it would be for his immediate advantage to do so ; all must die, the faithful and the perjured alike ; but Horcus (oath) had a nameless son swift to pursue without feet, strong to grasp without hands, who would destroy the whole race of the sinner. Glaucus craved forgiveness, but was informed that to tempt the god was equivalent to committing the crime. He went home and restored the deposit, but his whole family perished utterly from the land before three generations had passed by.

Yet another step remained to take. Punishment must be transferred from a man's innocent children to the man himself in a future life. But the Olympian theology was, originally at least, powerless to effect this revolution. Its gods, being personifications of celestial phenomena, had nothing to do with the dark underworld whither men descended after death. There existed, however, side by side with the brilliant religion of courts and camps which Greek poetry has made so familiar to us, another religion more popular with simple country-folk,[1] to whom war meant ruin, courts of justice a means invented by kings for exacting bribes, sea-voyages a senseless imprudence, chariot-racing a sinful waste of money, and beautiful women drones in the human hive, demons of extravagance invented by Zeus for the purpose of venting his spite against mankind. What interest could these poor people take in the resplendent guardians of their hereditary oppressors, in Hêrê and Athênê, Apollo and Poseidôn, Artemis and Aphroditê? But they had other gods peculiar to themselves, whose worship was wrapped in mystery, partly that its objects need not be lured away by the attraction of richer offerings elsewhere, partly because the activity of these Chthonian deities, as they were called, was naturally associated with darkness and secresy. Presiding over birth and death, over seed-time and harvest and vintage, they personified the frost-bound sleep of vegetation in winter and its return from a dark underworld in spring. Out of their worship grew stories which told how Persephonê, the fair daughter of Dêmêtêr, or Mother Earth, was carried away by Pluto to reign with him over the shades below, but after long searching was restored to her mother for eight months in every year; and how Dionysus, the wine-god, was twice born, first from

[1] Preller, *Griechische Mythologie*, I., p. 523 (3rd ed.), with which cf. Welcker, *op. cit.*, I., 234; and Mr. Walter Pater's *Demeter and Persephone*, and *A Study of Dionysus*, in the *Fortnightly Review* for Jan., Feb., and Dec. 1876. From their popular character, the country gods were favoured by the despots (Curtius, *Gr. Gesch.*, I., p. 338).

the earth burned up and fainting under the intolerable fire of a summer sky, respectively personified as Semelê and her lover Zeus, then from the protecting mist wrapped round him by his divine father, of whom it formed a part. Dionysus, too, was subject to alternations of depression and triumph, from the recital of which Attic drama was developed, and gained a footing in the infernal regions, whither we accompany him in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes. Another country god was Hermês, who seems to have been associated with planting and possession as well as with the demarcation and exchange of property, and who was also a conductor of souls to Hades. Finally, there were the Erinyes, children of night and dwellers in subterranean darkness; they could breed pestilence and discord, but could also avert them; they could blast the produce of the soil or increase its luxuriance and fertility; when blood was spilt on the ground, they made it blossom up again in a harvest of retributive hatred; they pursued the guilty during life, and did not relax their grasp after death; all law, whether physical or moral, was under their protection; the same Erinyes who, in the *Odyssey*, avenge on Oedipus the suicide of his mother, in the *Iliad* will not allow the miraculous speaking of a horse to continue; and we have seen in the last chapter how, according to Heracleitus, it is they who also prevent the sun from transgressing his appointed limits.[1] Dêmêtêr and Persephonê, too, seem to have been law-giving goddesses, as their great festival, celebrated by women alone, was called the Thesmophoria, while eternal happiness was promised to those who had been initiated into their mysteries at Eleusis; and we also find that moral maxims were graven on the marble busts of Hermês placed along every thoroughfare in Athens. We can thus understand why the mutilation of these Hermae caused such

[1] Cf. Wordsworth—

'Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
And the most ancient heavens through thee are fresh and strong.'

Ode to Duty.

rage and terror, accompanied, as it was rumoured to be, by a profanation of the Eleusinian mysteries; for any attack on the deities in question would seem to prefigure an attack on the settled order of things, the popular rights which they both symbolised and protected.

Here, then, we find, chiefly among the rustic population, a religion intimately associated with morality, and including the doctrine of retribution after death. But this simple faith, though well adapted to the few wants of its original votaries, could not be raised to the utmost expansion and purity of which it was susceptible without being brought into vivifying contact with that other Olympian religion which, as we have seen, belonged more peculiarly to the ruling aristocracy. The poor may be more moral than the rich, and the country than the town; nevertheless it is from dwellers in cities, and from the higher classes, including as they do a large percentage of educated, open-minded individuals, that the impulses to moral progress always proceed. If the narrowness and hardness of primitive social arrangements were overcome; if justice was disengaged from the ties of blood-relationship, and tempered with consideration for inevitable error; if deadly feuds were terminated by a habitual appeal to arbitration; if the worship of one supreme ideal was substituted for a blind sympathy with the ebb and flow of life on earth; if the numerical strength of states was increased by giving shelter to fugitives; if a Hellenic nation was created and held together by a common literature and a common civilisation, by oracles accessible to all, and by periodical games in which every free-born Greek could take part; and, lastly, if a brighter abode than the slumberous garden of Persephonê was assigned after death to the godlike heroes who had come forth from a thrice repeated ordeal with souls unstained by sin;[1]—all this was due to the military rather than to the industrial classes, to the spirit that breathes through Homer

[1] Pindar, *Olymp.*, II., 57 ff.; and *Fragm.*, 1–4 (Donaldson).

rather than to the tamer inspiration of Hesiod's muse. But if justice was raised to an Olympian throne; if righteous providence, no less than creative power, became an inalienable attribute of Zeus; if lyric poetry, from Archilochus to Simonides and Pindar, is one long hymn of prayer and praise ever turned upward in adoring love to the Divine; we must remember that Themis was a synonyme for Earth, and that Prometheus, the original friend of humanity, for whose benefit he invented every useful art, augury included, was her son. The seeds of immortal hope were first planted in the fructifying bosom of Dêmêtêr, and life, a forsaken Ariadnê, took refuge in the mystical embraces of Dionysus from the memory of a promise that had allured her to betray. Thus, we may conjecture that between hall and farm-house, between the Olympian and the Chthonian religions, there was a constant reaction going on, during which ethical ideas were continually expanding, and extricating themselves from the superstitious elements associated with their earliest theological expression.

III.

This process was conceived by Aeschylus as a conflict between two generations of gods, ending with their complete reconciliation. In the *Prometheus Bound* we have the commencement of the conflict, in the *Eumenides* its close. Our sympathies are apparently at first intended to be enlisted on behalf of the older divinities, but at last are claimed exclusively by the younger. As opposed to Prometheus, Zeus is evidently in the wrong, and seeks to make up for his deficiencies by arbitrary violence. In the *Oresteia* he is the champion of justice against iniquity, and through his interpreter, Apollo, he enforces a revised moral code against the antiquated claims of the Erinyes; these latter, however, ultimately consenting to become guardians of the new social

order. The Aeschylean drama shows us Greek religion at the highest level it could reach, unaided by philosophical reflection. With Sophocles a perceptible decline has already begun. We are loth to say anything that may sound like disparagement of so noble a poet. We yield to none in admiration for one who has combined the two highest qualities of art—sweetness and strength—more completely than any other singer, Homer alone excepted, and who has given the primordial affections their definitive expression for all time. But we cannot help perceiving an element of superstition in his dramas, which, so far, distinguishes them unfavourably from those of his Titanic predecessor. With Sophocles, when the gods interfere, it is to punish disrespect towards themselves, not to enforce justice between man and man. Ajax perishes by his own hand because he has neglected to ask for divine assistance in battle. Laius and Jocastê come to a tragic end through disobedience to a perfectly arbitrary oracle; and as a part of the same divine purpose Oedipus encounters the most frightful calamities by no fault of his own. The gods are, moreover, exclusively objects of fear; their sole business is to enforce the fulfilment of enigmatic prophecies; they give no assistance to the pious and virtuous characters. Antigonê is allowed to perish for having performed the last duties to her brother's corpse. Neoptolemus receives no aid in that struggle between ambition on the one hand with truthfulness and pity on the other which makes his character one of the most interesting in all imaginative literature. When Athênê bids Odysseus exult over the degradation of Ajax, the generous Ithacan refuses to her face, and falls back on the consciousness of a common humanity uniting him in sympathy with his prostrate foe.

The rift within the lute went on widening till all its music was turned to jarring discord. With the third great Attic dramatist we arrive at a period of complete dissolution.

Morality is not only separated from mythological tradition, but is openly at war with it. Religious belief, after becoming almost monotheistic, has relapsed into polytheism. With Euripides the gods do not, as with his predecessors, form a common council. They lead an independent existence, not interfering with each other, and pursuing private ends of their own — often very disreputable ones. Aphrodite inspires Phaedra with an incestuous passion for her stepson. Artemis is propitiated by human sacrifices. Hêrê causes Heraclês to kill his children in a fit of delirium. Zeus and Poseidôn are charged with breaking their own laws, and setting a bad example to mortals. Apollo, once so venerated, fares the worst of any. He outrages a noble maiden, and succeeds in palming off her child on the man whom she subsequently marries. He instigates the murder of a repentant enemy who has come to seek forgiveness at his shrine. He fails to protect Orestes from the consequences of matricide, committed at his own unwise suggestion. Political animosity may have had something to do with these attacks on a god who was believed to side with the Dorian confederacy against Athens. Doubtless, also, Euripides disbelieved many of the scandalous stories which he selected as appropriate materials for dramatic representation. But a satire on immoral beliefs would have been unnecessary had they not been generally accepted. Nor was the poet himself altogether a freethinker. One of his latest and most splendid works, the *Bacchae*, is a formal submission to the orthodox creed. Under the stimulus of an insane delusion, Pentheus is torn to pieces by his mother Agavê and her attendant Maenads, for having presumed to oppose the introduction of Dionysus-worship into Thebes. The antecedents of the new divinity are questionable, and the nature of his influence on the female population extremely suspicious. Yet much stress is laid on the impiety of Pentheus, and we are clearly intended to consider his fate as well-deserved.

Euripides is not a true thinker, and for that very reason fitly typifies a period when religion had been shaken to its very foundation, but still retained a strong hold on men's minds, and might at any time reassert its ancient authority with unexpected vigour. We gather, also, from his writings, that ethical sentiment had undergone a parallel transformation. He introduces characters and actions which the elder dramatists would have rejected as unworthy of tragedy, and not only introduces them, but composes elaborate speeches in their defence. Side by side with examples of devoted heroism we find such observations as that everyone loves himself best, and that those are most prosperous who attend most exclusively to their own interests. It so happens that in one instance where Euripides has chosen a subject already handled by Aeschylus, the difference of treatment shows how great a moral revolution had occurred in the interim. The conflict waged between Eteoclês and Polyneicês for their father's throne is the theme both of the *Seven against Thebes* and of the *Phoenician Women*. In both, Polyneicês bases his claim on grounds of right. It had been agreed that he and his brother should alternately hold sway over Thebes. His turn has arrived, and Eteoclês refuses to give way. Polyneicês endeavours to enforce his pretensions by bringing a foreign army against Thebes. Aeschylus makes him appear before the walls with an allegorical figure of Justice on his shield, promising to restore him to his father's seat. On hearing this, Eteoclês exclaims:—

> 'Aye, if Jove's virgin daughter Justice shared
> In deed or thought of his, then it might be.
> But neither when he left the darkling womb,
> Nor in his childhood, nor in youth, nor when
> The clustering hair first gathered round his chin,
> Hath Justice turned approving eyes on him;
> Nor deem I that she comes as his ally,
> Now that he wastes his native land with war,
> Or Justice most unjustly were she called
> If ruthless hearts could claim her fellowship.'[1]

[1] *Sep. con. Theb.*, 662–71.

Euripides, with greater dramatic skill, brings the two brothers together in presence of their mother, Jocastê. When Polyneicês has spoken, Eteoclês replies:—

'Honour and wisdom are but empty names
That mortals use, each with a different meaning,
Agreeing in the sound, not in the sense.
Hear, mother, undisguised my whole resolve!
Were Sovereignty, chief goddess among gods,
Far set as is the rising of a star,
Or buried deep in subterranean gloom,
There I would seek and win her for mine own.
. . . .
Come fire, come sword, yoke horses to the car,
And fill the plain with armed men, for I
Will not give up my royalty to him!
Let all my life be guiltless save in this:
I dare do any wrong for sovereign power—
The splendid guerdon of a splendid sin.'[1]

The contrast is not only direct, but designed, for Euripides had the work of his predecessor before him, and no doubt imagined that he was improving on it.

We perceive a precisely similar change of tone on comparing the two great historians who have respectively recorded the struggle of Greece against Persia, and the struggle of imperial Athens against Sparta and her allies. Though born within fifteen years of one another, Herodotus and Thucydides are virtually separated by an interval of two generations, for while the latter represents the most advanced thought of his time, the former lived among traditions inherited from the age preceding his own. Now, Herodotus is not more remarkable for the earnest piety than for the clear sense of justice which runs through his entire work. He draws no distinction between public and private morality. Whoever makes war on his neighbours without provocation, or rules without the consent of the governed, is, according to him, in the wrong, although he is well aware that such wrongs are constantly committed. Thucydides knows nothing

[1] *Phoenissae*, 503–23.

of supernatural interference in human affairs. After relating the tragical end of Nicias, he observes, not without a sceptical tendency, that of all the Greeks then living, this unfortunate general least deserved such a fate, so far as piety and respectability of character went. If there are gods they hold their position by superior strength. That the strong should enslave the weak is a universal and necessary law of Nature. The Spartans, who among themselves are most scrupulous in observing traditional obligations, in their dealings with others most openly identify gain with honour, and expediency with right. Even if the historian himself did not share these opinions, it is evident that they were widely entertained by his contemporaries, and he expressly informs us that Greek political morality had deteriorated to a frightful extent in consequence of the civil discords fomented by the conflict between Athens and Sparta ; while, in Athens at least, a similar corruption of private morality had begun with the great plague of 430, its chief symptom being a mad desire to extract the utmost possible enjoyment from life, for which purpose every means was considered legitimate. On this point Thucydides is confirmed and supplemented by the evidence of another contemporary authority. According to Aristophanes, the ancient discipline had in his time become very much relaxed. The rich were idle and extravagant; the poor mutinous ; young men were growing more and more insolent to their elders ; religion was derided ; all classes were animated by a common desire to make money and to spend it on sensual enjoyment. Only, instead of tracing back this profound demoralisation to a change in the social environment, Aristophanes attributes it to demagogues, harassing informers, and popular poets, but above all to the new culture then coming into vogue. Physical science had brought in atheism ; dialectic training had destroyed the sanctity of ethical restraints. When, however, the religious and virtuous Socrates is put forward as a type of both tend-

encies, our confidence in the comic poet's accuracy, if not in his good faith, becomes seriously shaken; and his whole tone so vividly recalls the analogous invectives now hurled from press and pulpit against every philosophic theory, every scientific discovery, every social reform at variance with traditional beliefs or threatening the sinister interests which have gathered round iniquitous institutions, that at first we feel tempted to follow Grote in rejecting his testimony altogether. So far, however, as the actual phenomena themselves are concerned, and apart from their generating antecedents, Aristophanes does but bring into more picturesque prominence what graver observers are content to indicate, and what Plato, writing a generation later, treats as an unquestionable reality. Nor is the fact of a lowered moral tone going along with accelerated mental activity either incredible or unparalleled. Modern history knows of at least two periods remarkable for such a conjunction, the Renaissance and the eighteenth century, the former stained with every imaginable crime, the latter impure throughout, and lapsing into bloodthirsty violence at its close. Moral progress, like every other mode of motion, has its appropriate rhythm—its epochs of severe restraint followed by epochs of rebellious license. And when, as an aggravation of the reaction from which they periodically suffer, ethical principles have become associated with a mythology whose decay, at first retarded, is finally hastened by their activity, it is still easier to understand how they may share in its discredit, and only regain their ascendency by allying themselves with a purified form of the old religion, until they can be disentangled from the compromising support of all unverified theories whatever. We have every reason to believe that Greek life and thought did pass through such a crisis during the second half of the fifth century B.C., and we have now to deal with the speculative aspects of that crisis, so far as they are represented by the Sophists.

IV.

The word Sophist in modern languages means one who purposely uses fallacious arguments. Our definition was probably derived from that given by Aristotle in his *Topics*, but does not entirely reproduce it. What we call sophistry was with him eristic, or the art of unfair disputation ; and by Sophist he means one who practises the eristic art for gain. He also defines sophistry as the appearance without the reality of wisdom. A very similar account of the Sophists and their art is given by Plato in what seems to be one of his later dialogues ; and another dialogue, probably composed some time previously, shows us how eristic was actually practised by two Sophists, Euthydêmus and Dionysodôrus, who had learned the art, which is represented as a very easy accomplishment, when already old men. Their performance is not edifying ; and one only wonders how any Greek could have been induced to pay for the privilege of witnessing such an exhibition. But the word Sophist, in its original signification, was an entirely honourable name. It meant a sage, a wise and learned man, like Solon, or, for that matter, like Plato and Aristotle themselves. The interval between these widely-different connotations is filled up and explained by a number of individuals as to whom our information is principally, though by no means entirely, derived from Plato. All of them were professional teachers, receiving payment for their services ; all made a particular study of language, some aiming more particularly at accuracy, others at beauty of expression. While no common doctrine can be attributed to them as a class, as individuals they are connected by a series of graduated transitions, the final outcome of which will enable us to understand how, from a title of respect, their name could be turned into a byword of reproach. The Sophists, concerning whom some details have been trans-

mitted to us, are Protagoras, Gorgias, Prodicus, Hippias, Pôlus, Thrasymachus, and the Eristics already mentioned. We have placed them, so far as their ages can be determined, in chronological order, but their logical order is somewhat different. The first two on the list were born about 480 B.C., and the second pair possibly twenty years later. But neither Protagoras nor Gorgias seems to have published his most characteristic theories until a rather advanced time of life, for they are nowhere alluded to by the Xenophontic Socrates, who, on the other hand, is well acquainted with both Prodicus and Hippias, while, conversely, Plato is most interested in the former pair. We shall also presently see that the scepticism of the elder Sophists can best be explained by reference to the more dogmatic theories of their younger contemporaries, which again easily fit on to the physical speculations of earlier thinkers.

Prodicus was born in Ceos, a little island belonging to the Athenian confederacy, and seems to have habitually resided at Athens. His health was delicate, and he wrapped up a good deal, as we learn from the ridicule of Plato, always pitiless to a valetudinarian. Judging from two allusions in Aristophanes, he taught natural science in such a manner as to conciliate even that unsparing enemy of the new learning.[1] He also gave moral instruction grounded on the traditional ideas of his country, a pleasing specimen of which has been preserved. It is conveyed under the form of an apologue, entitled the Choice of Heraclês, and was taken down in its present form by Xenophon from the lips of Socrates, who quoted it, with full approval, for the benefit of his own disciples. Prodicus also lectured on the use of words, laying especial emphasis on the distinction of synonyms. We hear, not without sympathy, that he tried to check the

[1] Οὐ γὰρ ἄλλῳ γ' ὑπακούσαιμεν τῶν νῦν μετεωροσοφιστῶν πλὴν ἢ Προδίκῳ, τῷ μὲν σοφίας καὶ γνώμης οὕνεκα κ.τ.λ.—*Nub.*, 361–2. Cf. *Av.*, 692.

indiscriminate employment of 'awful' (δεινός), which was even more rife at Athens than among ourselves. Finally, we are told that, like many moderns, he considered the popular divinities to be personifications of natural phenomena. Hippias, who was a native of Elis, seems to have taught on very much the same system. It would appear that he lectured principally on astronomy and physics, but did not neglect language, and is said to have invented an art of memory. His restless inquisitiveness was also exercised on ancient history, and his erudition in that subject was taxed to the utmost during a visit to Sparta, where the unlettered people still delighted in old stories, which among the more enlightened Greeks had been superseded by topics of livelier and fresher interest. At Sparta, too, he recited, with great applause, an ethical discourse under the form of advice given by Nestor to Neoptolemus after the capture of Troy. We know, on good authority, that Hippias habitually distinguished between natural and customary law, the former being, according to him, everywhere the same, while the latter varied from state to state, and in the same state at different times. Natural law he held to be alone binding and alone salutary. On this subject the following expressions, evidently intended to be characteristic, are put into his mouth by Plato:—'All of you who are here present I reckon to be kinsmen and friends and fellow-citizens, by nature and not by law; for by nature like is akin to like, whereas law is the tyrant of mankind, and often compels us to do many things which are against Nature.'[1] Here two distinct ideas are implied, the idea that Nature is a moral guide, and, further, the idea that she is opposed to convention. The habit of looking for examples and lessons to some simpler life than their own prevailed among the Greeks from a very early period, and is, indeed, very common in primitive societies. Homer's similes are a case in point; while all that we are told

[1] Plato, *Protagoras*, 337, D; Jowett's Transl., vol. I., p. 152.

about the innocence and felicity of the Aethiopians and Hyperboreans seems to indicate a deep-rooted belief in the moral superiority of savage to civilised nations; and Hesiod's fiction of the Four Ages, beginning with a golden age, arises from a kindred notion that intellectual progress is accompanied by moral corruption. Simonides of Amorgus illustrates the various types of womankind by examples from the animal world; and Aesop's fables, dating from the first half of the sixth century, give ethical instruction under the same disguise. We have already pointed out how Greek rural religion established a thorough-going connexion between physical and moral phenomena, and how Heracleitus followed in the same track. Now, one great result of early Greek thought, as described in our first chapter, was to combine all these scattered fugitive incoherent ideas under a single conception, thus enabling them to elucidate and support one another. This was the conception of Nature as a universal all-creative eternal power, first superior to the gods, then altogether superseding them. When Homer called Zeus the father of gods and men; when Pindar said that both races, the divine and the human, are sprung from one mother (Earth);[1] when, again, he spoke of law as an absolute king; or when Aeschylus set destiny above Zeus himself;[2] they were but foreshadowing a more despotic authority, whose dominion is even now not extinct, is perhaps being renewed under the title of Evolution. The word Nature was used by most philosophers, and the thing was implied by all. They did not, indeed, commit the mistake of personifying a convenient abstraction; but a conception which they substituted for the gods would soon inherit every attribute of divine agency. Moreover, the Nature of philosophy had three fundamental attributes admitting of ready application as ethical standards. She was everywhere the same; fire burned in Greece and Persia alike. She tended towards an

[1] *Nem.*, VI., *sub. in.* [2] *Prom.*, 518.

orderly system where every agent or element is limited to its appropriate sphere. And she proceeded on a principle of universal compensation, all gains in one direction being paid for by losses in another, and every disturbance being eventually rectified by a restoration of equilibrium. It was, indeed, by no means surprising that truths which were generalised from the experience of Greek social life should now return to confirm the orderliness of that life with the sanction of an all-pervading law.

Euripides gives us an interesting example of the style in which this ethical application of physical science could be practised. We have seen how Eteoclês expresses his determination to do and dare all for the sake of sovereign power. His mother, Jocastê, gently rebukes him as follows :—

> 'Honour Equality who binds together
> Both friends and cities and confederates,
> For equity is law, law equity ;
> The lesser is the greater's enemy,
> And disadvantaged aye begins the strife.
> From her our measures, weights, and numbers come,
> Defined and ordered by Equality ;
> So do the night's blind eye and sun's bright orb
> Walk equal courses in their yearly round,
> And neither is embittered by defeat ;
> And while both light and darkness serve mankind
> Wilt thou not bear an equal in thy house ?'[1]

On examining the apologue of Prodicus, we find it characterised by a somewhat similar style of reasoning. There is, it is true, no reference to physical phenomena, but Virtue dwells strongly on the truth that nothing can be had for nothing, and that pleasure must either be purchased by toil or atoned for by languor, satiety, and premature decay.

[1] *Phoenissae*, 536–47. There is a delicious parody of this method in the *Clouds*. A creditor asks Strepsiades, who has been taking lessons in philosophy, to pay him the interest on a loan. Strepsiades begs to know whether the sea is any fuller now than it used to be. 'No,' replies the other, 'for it would not be just,' (*οὐ γὰρ δίκαιον πλείον εἶναι*). 'Then, you wretch,' rejoins his debtor, 'do you suppose that the sea is not to get any fuller although all the rivers are flowing into it, and that your money is to go on increasing?' (1290–95.)

We know also that the Cynical school, as represented by Antisthenês, rejected all pleasure on the ground that it was always paid for by an equal amount of pain; and Heraclês, the Prodicean type of a youth who follows virtue in preference to vice disguised as happiness, was also the favourite hero of the Cynics. Again, Plato alludes, in the *Philêbus*, to certain thinkers, reputed to be 'great on the subject of physics,' who deny the very existence of pleasure. Critics have been at a loss to identify these persons, and rather reluctantly put up with the explanation that Antisthenês and his school are referred to. Antisthenês was a friend of Prodicus, and may at one time have shared in his scientific studies, thus giving occasion to the association touched on by Plato. But is it not equally possible that Prodicus left behind disciples who, like him, combined moral with physical teaching; and, going a little further, may we not conjecture that their opposition to Hedonism was inherited from the master himself, who, like the Stoics afterwards, may have based it on an application of physical reasoning to ethics?

Still more important was the antithesis between Nature and convention, which, so far as we know, originated exclusively with Hippias. We have already observed that universality and necessity were, with the Greeks, standing marks of naturalness. The customs of different countries were, on the other hand, distinguished by extreme variety, amounting sometimes to diametrical opposition. Herodotus was fond of calling attention to such contrasts; only, he drew from them the conclusion that law, to be so arbitrary, must needs possess supreme and sacred authority. According to the more plausible interpretation of Hippias, the variety, and at least in Greek democracies, the changeability of law proved that it was neither sacred nor binding. He also looked on artificial social institutions as the sole cause of division and discord among mankind. Here we already see the dawn of a cosmopolitanism afterwards preached by Cynic and

Stoic philosophers. Furthermore, to discover the natural rule of right, he compared the laws of different nations, and selected those which were held by all in common as the basis of an ethical system.[1] Now, this is precisely what was done by the Roman jurists long afterwards under the inspiration of Stoical teaching. We have it on the high authority of Sir Henry Maine that they identified the *Jus Gentium*, that is, the laws supposed to be observed by all nations alike, with the *Jus Naturale*, that is, the code by which men were governed in their primitive condition of innocence. It was by a gradual application of this ideal standard that the numerous inequalities between different classes of persons, enforced by ancient Roman law, were removed, and that contract was substituted for status. Above all, the abolition of slavery was, if not directly caused, at any rate powerfully aided, by the belief that it was against Nature. At the beginning of the fourteenth century we find Louis Hutin, King of France, assigning as a reason for the enfranchisement of his serfs, that, 'according to natural law, everybody ought to be born free,' and although Sir H. Maine holds this to have been a mistaken interpretation of the juridical axiom 'omnes homines naturâ aequales sunt,' which means not an ideal to be attained, but a primitive condition from which we have departed: nevertheless it very faithfully reproduces the theory of those Greek philosophers from whom the idea of a natural law was derived. That, in Aristotle's time at least, a party existed who were opposed to slavery on theoretical grounds of right is perfectly evident from the language of the *Politics*. 'Some persons,' says Aristotle, 'think that slave-holding is against nature, for that one man is a slave and another free by law, while by nature there is no difference between them, for which reason it is unjust as being the result of force.'[2] And he proceeds to prove the contrary at length. The same doctrine of natural equality led to important political consequences, having, again according to Sir

[1] Xenophon. *Memor.*, IV., iv., 19. [2] *Pol.*, I., ii.

H. Maine, contributed both to the American Declaration of Independence and to the French Revolution.

There is one more aspect deserving our attention, under which the theory of Nature has been presented both in ancient and modern times. A dialogue which, whether rightly or wrongly attributed to Plato, may be taken as good evidence on the subject it relates to,[1] exhibits Hippias in the character of a universal genius, who can not only teach every science and practise every kind of literary composition, but has also manufactured all the clothes and other articles about his person. Here we have precisely the sort of versatility which characterises uncivilised society, and which believers in a state of nature love to encourage at all times. The division of labour, while it carries us ever farther from barbarism, makes us more dependent on each other. An Odysseus is master of many arts, a Themistocles of two, a Demosthenes of only one. A Norwegian peasant can do more for himself than an English countryman, and therefore makes a better colonist. If we must return to Nature, our first step should be to learn a number of trades, and so be better able to shift for ourselves. Such was the ideal of Hippias, and it was also the ideal of the eighteenth century. Its literature begins with *Robinson Crusoe*, the story of a man who is accidentally compelled to provide himself, during many years, with all the necessaries of life. Its educational manuals are, in France, Rousseau's *Émile*; in England, Day's *Sandford and Merton*, both teaching that the young should be thrown as much as possible on their own resources. One of its types is Diderot, who learns handicrafts that he may describe them in the *Encyclopédie*. Its two great spokesmen are Voltaire and Goethe, who, after cultivating every department of literature, take in statesmanship as well. And its last word is Schiller's *Letters on Aesthetic Culture*, holding up totality of existence as the supreme ideal to be sought after.

[1] The *Hippias Minor*.

There is no reason to believe that Hippias used his distinction between Nature and convention as an argument for despotism. It would rather appear that, if anything, he and his school desired to establish a more complete equality among men. Others, however, both rhetoricians and practical statesmen, were not slow to draw an opposite conclusion. They saw that where no law was recognised, as between different nations, nothing but violence and the right of the stronger prevailed. It was once believed that aggressions which human law could not reach found no favour with the gods, and dread of the divine displeasure may have done something towards restraining them. But religion had partly been destroyed by the new culture, partly perverted into a sanction for wrong-doing. By what right, it was asked, did Zeus himself reign? Had he not unlawfully dethroned his father, Cronos, and did he not now hold power simply by virtue of superior strength? Similar reasonings were soon applied to the internal government of each state. It was alleged that the ablest citizens could lay claim to uncontrolled supremacy by a title older than any social fiction. Rules of right meant nothing but a permanent conspiracy of the weak to withdraw themselves from the legitimate dominion of their born master, and to bamboozle him into a voluntary surrender of his natural privileges. Sentiments bearing a superficial resemblance to these have occasionally found utterance among ourselves. Nevertheless, it would be most unjust to compare Carlyle and Mr. Froude with Critias and Calliclês. We believe that their preference of despotism to representative government is an entire mistake. But we know that with them as with us the good of the governed is the sole end desired. The gentlemen of Athens sought after supreme power only as a means for gratifying their worst passions without let or hindrance; and for that purpose they were ready to ally themselves with every foreign enemy in turn, or to flatter the caprices of the Dêmos, if that policy

promised to answer equally well. The antisocial theories of these 'young lions,' as they were called by their enemies and sometimes by themselves also, do not seem to have been supported by any public teacher. If we are to believe Plato, Pôlus, a Sicilian rhetor, did indeed regard Archelaus, the abler Louis Napoleon of his time, with sympathy and envious admiration, but without attempting to justify the crimes of his hero by an appeal to natural law. The corruption of theoretical morality among the paid teachers took a more subtle form. Instead of opposing one principle to another, they held that all law had the same source, being an emanation from the will of the stronger, and exclusively designed to promote his interest. Justice, according to Thrasymachus in the *Republic*, is another's good, which is true enough, and to practise it except under compulsion is foolish, which, whatever Grote may say, is a grossly immoral doctrine.

V.

We have seen how the idea of Nature, first evolved by physical philosophy, was taken by some, at least, among the Sophists as a basis for their ethical teaching; then how an interpretation utterly opposed to theirs was put on it by practical men, and how this second interpretation was so generalised by the younger rhetoricians as to involve the denial of all morality whatever. Meanwhile, another equally important conception, destined to come into speedy and prolonged antagonism with the idea of Nature, and like it to exercise a powerful influence on ethical reflection, had almost contemporaneously been elaborated out of the materials which earlier speculation supplied. From Parmenides and Heracleitus down, every philosopher who had propounded a theory of the world, had also more or less peremptorily insisted on the fact that his theory differed widely from common belief. Those who held that change is

impossible, and those who taught that everything is incessantly changing; those who asserted the indestructibility of matter, and those who denied its continuity; those who took away objective reality from every quality except extension and resistance, and those who affirmed that the smallest molecules partook more or less of every attribute that is revealed to sense—all these, however much they might disagree among themselves, agreed in declaring that the received opinions of mankind were an utter delusion. Thus, a sharp distinction came to be drawn between the misleading sense-impressions and the objective reality to which thought alone could penetrate. It was by combining these two elements, sensation and thought, that the idea of mind was originally constituted. And mind when so understood could not well be accounted for by any of the materialistic hypotheses at first proposed. The senses must differ profoundly from that of which they give such an unfaithful report; while reason, which Anaxagoras had so carefully differentiated from every other form of existence, carried back its distinction to the subjective sphere, and became clothed with a new spirituality when reintegrated in the consciousness of man.

The first result of this separation between man and the world was a complete breach with the old physical philosophy, shown, on the one hand, by an abandonment of speculative studies, on the other, by a substitution of convention for Nature as the recognised standard of right. Both consequences were drawn by Protagoras, the most eminent of the Sophists. We have now to consider more particularly what was his part in the great drama of which we are attempting to give an intelligible account.

Protagoras was born about 480 B.C. He was a fellow-townsman of Democritus, and has been represented, though not on good authority, as a disciple of that illustrious thinker. It was rather by a study of Heracleitus that his

philosophical opinions, so far as they were borrowed from others, seem to have been most decisively determined. In any case, practice, not theory, was the principal occupation of his life. He gave instruction for payment in the higher branches of a liberal education, and adopted the name of Sophist, which before had simply meant a wise man, as an honourable title for his new calling. Protagoras was a very popular teacher. The news of his arrival in a strange city excited immense enthusiasm, and he was followed from place to place by a band of eager disciples. At Athens he was honoured by the friendship of such men as Pericles and Euripides. It was at the house of the great tragic poet that he read out a work beginning with the ominous declaration, 'I cannot tell whether the gods exist or not; life is too short for such difficult investigations.'[1] Athenian bigotry took alarm directly. The book containing this frank confession of agnosticism was publicly burned, all purchasers being compelled to give up the copies in their possession. The author himself was either banished or took flight, and perished by shipwreck on the way to Sicily before completing his seventieth year.

The scepticism of Protagoras went beyond theology and extended to all science whatever. Such, at least, seems to have been the force of his celebrated declaration that 'man is the measure of all things, both as regards their existence and their non-existence.'[2] According to Plato, this doctrine followed from the identification of knowledge with sensible perception, which in its turn was based on a modified form of the Heracleitean theory of a perpetual flux. The series of external changes which constitutes Nature, acting on the series of internal changes which constitutes each man's personality, produces particular sensations, and these alone are the true reality. They vary with every variation in the

[1] Diog. L., IX., viii., 54.

[2] Diog. L., IX., viii., 51.

factors, and therefore are not the same for separate individuals. Each man's perceptions are true for himself, but for himself alone. Plato easily shows that such a theory of truth is at variance with ordinary opinion, and that if all opinions are true, it must necessarily stand self-condemned. We may also observe that if nothing can be known but sensation, nothing can be known of its conditions. It would, however, be unfair to convict Protagoras of talking nonsense on the unsupported authority of the *Theaetêtus*. Plato himself suggests that a better case might have been made out for the incriminated doctrine could its author have been heard in self-defence. We may conjecture that Protagoras did not distinguish very accurately between existence, knowledge, and applicability to practice. If we assume, what there seems good reason to believe, that in the great controversy of Nature *versus* Law, Protagoras sided with the latter, his position will at once become clear. When the champions of Nature credited her with a stability and an authority greater than could be claimed for merely human arrangements, it was a judicious step to carry the war into their territory, and ask, on what foundation then does Nature herself stand? Is not she, too, perpetually changing, and do we not become acquainted with her entirely through our own feelings? Ought not those feelings to be taken as the ultimate standard in all questions of right and wrong? Individual opinion is a fact which must be reckoned with, but which can be changed by persuasion, not by appeals to something that we none of us know anything about. *Man* is the measure of all things, not the will of gods whose very existence is uncertain, nor yet a purely hypothetical state of Nature. Human interests must take precedence of every other consideration. Hector meant nothing else when he preferred the obvious dictates of patriotism to inferences drawn from the flight of birds.

We now understand why Protagoras, in the Platonic dialogue bearing his name, should glance scornfully at the

method of instruction pursued by Hippias, with his lectures on astronomy, and why he prefers to discuss obscure passages in the poets. The quarrel between a classical and a scientific education was just then beginning, and Protagoras, as a Humanist, sided with the classics. Again, he does not think much of the 'great and sane and noble race of brutes.' He would not, like the Cynics, take them as examples of conduct. Man, he says, is naturally worse provided for than any animal; even the divine gift of wisdom would not save him from extinction without the priceless social virtues of justice and reverence, that is, the regard for public opinion which Mr. Darwin, too, has represented as the strongest moralising power in primitive society. And, as the possession of these qualities constituted the fundamental distinction between men and brutes, so also did the advantage of civilisation over barbarism rest on their superior development, a development due to the ethical instruction received by every citizen from his earliest infancy, reinforced through after-life by the sterner correction of legal punishments, and completed by the elimination of all individuals demonstrably unfitted for the social state. Protagoras had no sympathy with those who affect to prefer the simplicity of savages to the fancied corruption of civilisation. Hear how he answers the Rousseaus and Diderots of his time:—

'I would have you consider that he who appears to you to be the worst of those who have been brought up in laws and humanities would appear to be a just man and a master of justice if he were to be compared with men who had no education, or courts of justice, or laws, or any restraints upon them which compelled them to practise virtue—with the savages, for example, whom the poet Pherecrates exhibited on the stage at the last year's Lenaean festival. If you were living among men such as the man-haters in his chorus, you would be only too glad to meet with Eurybates and Phrynondas, and you would sorrowfully long to revisit the rascality of this part of the world.'[1]

[1] Plato, *Protagoras*, 327; Jowett's Transl., vol. I., p. 140. On the superior

We find the same theory reproduced and enforced with weighty illustrations by the great historian of that age. It is not known whether Thucydides owed any part of his culture to Protagoras, but the introduction to his history breathes the same spirit as the observations which we have just transcribed. He, too, characterises antiquity as a scene of barbarism, isolation, and lawless violence, particularly remarking that piracy was not then counted a dishonourable profession. He points to the tribes outside Greece, together with the most backward among the Greeks themselves, as representing the low condition from which Athens and her sister states had only emerged within a comparatively recent period. And in the funeral oration which he puts into the mouth of Pericles, the legendary glories of Athens are passed over without the slighest allusion,[1] while exclusive prominence is given to her proud position as the intellectual centre of Greece. Evidently a radical change had taken place in men's conceptions since Herodotus wrote. They were learning to despise the mythical glories of their ancestors, to exalt the present at the expense of the past, to fix their attention exclusively on immediate human interests, and, possibly, to anticipate the coming of a loftier civilisation than had as yet been seen.

The evolution of Greek tragic poetry bears witness to the same transformation of taste. On comparing Sophocles with Aeschylus, we are struck by a change of tone analogous to that which distinguishes Thucydides from Herodotus. It has been shown in our first chapter how the elder dramatist delights in tracing events and institutions back to their first origin, and in following derivations through the steps of a genealogical sequence. Sophocles, on the other hand, limits himself to a close analysis of the action immediately represented, the motives by which his characters are in-

morality which accompanies advancing civilisation, as evinced by the great increase of mutual trust, see Maine's *Ancient Law*, pp. 306–7.

[1] This point is noticed by Zeller, *Ph. d. Gr.*, II., 22.

fluenced, and the arguments by which their conduct is justified or condemned. We have already touched on the very different attitude assumed towards religion by these two great poets. Here we have only to add that while Aeschylus fills his dramas with supernatural beings, and frequently restricts his mortal actors to the interpretation or execution of a divine mandate, Sophocles, representing the spirit of Greek Humanism, only once brings a god on the stage, and dwells exclusively on the emotions of pride, ambition, revenge, terror, pity, and affection, by which men and women of a lofty type are actuated. Again (and this is one of his poetic superiorities), Aeschylus has an open sense for the external world; his imagination ranges far and wide from land to land; his pages are filled with the fire and light, the music and movement of Nature in a Southern country. He leads before us in splendid procession the starry-kirtled night; the bright rulers that bring round winter and summer; the dazzling sunshine; the forked flashes of lightning; the roaring thunder; the white-winged snow-flakes; the rain descending on thirsty flowers; the sea now rippling with infinite laughter, now moaning on the shingle, growing hoary under rough blasts, with its eastern waves dashing against the new-risen sun, or, again, lulled to waveless, windless, noonday sleep; the volcano with its volleys of fire-breathing spray and fierce jaws of devouring lava; the eddying whorls of dust; the resistless mountain-torrent; the meadow-dews; the flowers of spring and fruits of summer; the evergreen olive, and trees that give leafy shelter from dogstar heat. For all this world of wonder and beauty Sophocles offers only a few meagre allusions to the phenomena presented by sunshine and storm. No poet has ever so entirely concentrated his attention on human deeds and human passions. Only the grove of Colônus, interwoven with his own earliest recollections, had power to draw from him, in extreme old age, a song such as the nightingale might have warbled amid those

inviolable recesses where the ivy and laurel, the vine and olive gave a never-failing shelter against sun and wind alike. Yet even this leafy covert is but an image of the poet's own imagination, undisturbed by outward influences, self-involved, self-protected, and self-sustained. Of course, we are only re-stating in different language what has long been known, that the epic element of poetry, before so prominent, was with Sophocles entirely displaced by the dramatic; but if Sophocles became the greatest dramatist of antiquity, it was precisely because no other writer could, like him, work out a catastrophe solely through the action of mind on mind, without any intervention of physical force; and if he possessed this faculty, it was because Greek thought as a whole had been turned inward; because he shared in the devotion to psychological studies equally exemplified by his younger contemporaries, Protagoras, Thucydides, and Socrates, all of whom might have taken for their motto the noble lines—

> 'On earth there is nothing great but man,
> In man there is nothing great but mind.'

We have said that Protagoras was a partisan of Nomos, or convention, against Nature. That was the conservative side of his character. Still, Nomos was not with him what it had been with the older Greeks, an immutable tradition indistinguishable from physical law. It was a human creation, and represented the outcome of inherited experience, admitting always of change for the better. Hence the vast importance which he attributed to education. This, no doubt, was magnifying his own office, for the training of youth was his profession. But, unquestionably, the feelings of his more liberal contemporaries went with him. A generation before, Pindar had spoken scornfully of intellectual culture as a vain attempt to make up for the absence of genius which the gods alone could give. Yet Pindar himself was always careful to dwell on the services rendered by professional trainers to the

victorious athletes whose praises he sang, and there was really no reason why genius and culture should be permanently dissociated. A Themistocles might decide offhand on the questions brought before him ; a Pericles, dealing with much more complex interests, already needed a more careful preparation.

On the other hand, conservatives like Aristophanes continued to oppose the spread of education with acrimonious zeal. Some of their arguments have a curiously familiar ring. Intellectual pursuits, they said, were bad for the health, led to irreligion and immorality, made young people quite unlike their grandfathers, and were somehow or other connected with loose company and a fast life. This last insinuation was in one respect the very reverse of true. So far as personal morality went, nothing could be better for it than the change introduced by Protagoras from amateur to paid teaching. Before this time, a Greek youth who wished for something better than the very elementary instruction given at school, could only attach himself to some older and wiser friend, whose conversation might be very improving, but who was pretty sure to introduce a sentimental element into their relationship equally discreditable to both.[1] A similar danger has always existed with regard to highly intelligent women, although it may have threatened a smaller number of individuals ; and the efforts now being made to provide them with a systematic education under official superintendence will incidentally have the effect of saving our future Héloises and Julies from the tuition of an Abélard or a Saint-Preux.

It was their habit of teaching rhetoric as an art which raised the fiercest storm of indignation against Protagoras and his colleagues. The endeavour to discover rules for addressing a tribunal or a popular assembly in the manner best cal-

[1] This phase of Greek life is well illustrated by the addresses of Theognis to Cyrnus.

culated to win their assent had originated quite independently of any philosophical theory. On the re-establishment of order, that is to say of popular government, in Sicily, many lawsuits arose out of events which had happened years before; and, owing to the lapse of time, demonstrative evidence was not available. Accordingly, recourse was had on both sides to arguments possessing a greater or less degree of probability. The art of putting such probable inferences so as to produce persuasion demanded great technical skill; and two Sicilians, Corax and Tisias by name, composed treatises on the subject. It would appear that the new-born art was taken up by Protagoras and developed in the direction of increased dialectical subtlety. We are informed that he undertook to make the worse appear the better reason; and this very soon came to be popularly considered as an accomplishment taught by all philosophers, Socrates among the rest. But if Protagoras merely meant that he would teach the art of reasoning, one hardly sees how he could have expressed himself otherwise, consistently with the antithetical style of his age. We should say more simply that a case is strengthened by the ability to argue it properly. It has not been shown that the Protagorean dialectic offered exceptional facilities for maintaining unjust pretensions. Taken, however, in connexion with the humanistic teaching, it had an unsettling and sceptical tendency. All belief and all practice rested on law, and law was the result of a convention made among men and ultimately produced by individual conviction. What one man had done another could undo. Religious tradition and natural right, the sole external standards, had already disappeared. There remained the test of self-consistency, and against this all the subtlety of the new dialectic was turned. The triumph of Eristic was to show that a speaker had contradicted himself, no matter how his statements might be worded. Moreover, now that reference to an objective reality was disallowed, words were put in the place

of things and treated like concrete realities. The next step was to tear them out of the grammatical construction, where alone they possessed any truth or meaning, each being simultaneously credited with all the uses which at any time it might be made to fulfil. For example, if a man knew one thing he knew all, for he had knowledge, and knowledge is of everything knowable. Much that seems to us tedious or superfluous in Aristotle's expositions was intended as a safeguard against this endless cavilling. Finally, negation itself was eliminated along with the possibility of falsehood and contradiction. For it was argued that 'nothing' had no existence and could not be an object of thought.[1]

VI.

From utter confusion to extreme nihilism there was but a single step. This step was taken by Gorgias, the Sicilian rhetorician, who held the same relation towards western Hellas and the Eleatic school as that which Protagoras held towards eastern Hellas and the philosophy of Heracleitus. He, like his eminent contemporary, was opposed to the thinkers whom, borrowing a useful term from the nomenclature of the last century, we may call the Greek physiocrats. To confute them, he wrote a book with the significant title, *On Nature or Nothing*: maintaining, first, that nothing exists; secondly, that if anything exists, we cannot know it; thirdly, that if we know it, there is no possibility of communicating our knowledge to others. The first thesis was established by pushing the Eleatic arguments against movement and change a little further; the second by showing that thought and existence are different, or else everything that is thought of would exist; the third by establishing a similar incommensurability between words and sensations. Grote

[1] Eristicism had also points of contact with the philosophies of Parmenides and Socrates which will be indicated in a future chapter.

has attempted to show that Gorgias was only arguing against the existence of a noumenon underlying phenomena, such as all idealists deny. Zeller has, however, convincingly proved that Gorgias, in common with every other thinker before Plato, was ignorant of this distinction;[1] and we may add that it would leave the second and third theses absolutely unimpaired. We must take the whole together as constituting a declaration of war against science, an assertion, in still stronger language, of the agnosticism taught by Protagoras. The truth is, that a Greek controversialist generally overproved his case, and in order to overwhelm an adversary pulled down the whole house, even at the risk of being buried among the ruins himself. A modern reasoner, taking his cue from Gorgias, without pushing the matter to such an extreme, might carry on his attack on lines running parallel with those laid down by the Sicilian Sophist. He would begin by denying the existence of a 'state of Nature'; for such a state must be either variable or constant. If it is constant, how could civilisation ever have arisen? If it is variable, what becomes of the fixed standard appealed to? Then, again, supposing such a state ever to have existed, how could authentic information about it have come down to us through the ages of corruption which are supposed to have intervened? And, lastly, granting that a state of Nature accessible to enquiry has ever existed, how can we reorganise society on the basis of such discordant data as are presented to us by the physiocrats, no two of whom agree with regard to the first principles of natural order; one saying that it is equality, another aristocracy, and a third despotism? We do not say that these arguments are conclusive, we only mean that in relation to modern thought they very fairly represent the dialectic artillery brought to bear by Greek humanism against its naturalistic opponents.

We have seen how Prodicus and Hippias professed to

[1] *Ph. d. Gr.*, I., 903 (3rd ed.).

teach all science, all literature, and all virtuous accomplishments. We have seen how Protagoras rejected every kind of knowledge unconnected with social culture. We now find Gorgias going a step further. In his later years, at least, he professes to teach nothing but rhetoric or the art of persuasion. We say in his later years, for at one time he seems to have taught ethics and psychology as well.[1] But the Gorgias of Plato's famous dialogue limits himself to the power of producing persuasion by words on all possible subjects, even those of whose details he is ignorant. Wherever the rhetorician comes into competition with the professional he will beat him on his own ground, and will be preferred to him for every public office. The type is by no means extinct, and flourishes like a green bay-tree among ourselves. Like Pendennis, a writer of this kind will review any book from the height of superior knowledge acquired by two hours' reading in the British Museum; or, if he is adroit enough, will dispense with even that slender amount of preparation. He need not even trouble himself to read the book which he criticises. A superficial acquaintance with magazine articles will qualify him to pass judgment on all life, all religion, and all philosophy. But it is in politics that the finest career lies before him. He rises to power by attacking the measures of real statesmen, and remains there by adopting them. He becomes Chancellor of the Exchequer by gross economical blundering, and Prime Minister by a happy mixture of epigram and adulation.

Rhetoric conferred even greater power in old Athens than in modern England. Not only did mastery of expression lead to public employment; but also, as every citizen was permitted by law to address his assembled fellow-countrymen and propose measures for their acceptance, it became a direct passport to supreme political authority. Nor was this all. At Athens the employment of professional advocates was not

[1] See Plato's *Meno*, *sub. in.*

allowed, and it was easy to prosecute an enemy on the most frivolous pretexts. If the defendant happened to be wealthy, and if condemnation involved a loss of property, there was a prejudice against him in the minds of the jury, confiscation being regarded as a convenient resource for replenishing the national exchequer. Thus the possession of rhetorical ability became a formidable weapon in the hands of unscrupulous citizens, who were enabled to extort large sums by the mere threat of putting rich men on their trial for some real or pretended offence. This systematic employment of rhetoric for purposes of self-aggrandisement bore much the same relation to the teaching of Protagoras and Gorgias as the open and violent seizure of supreme power on the plea of natural superiority bore to the theories of their rivals, being the way in which practical men applied the principle that truth is determined by persuasion. It was also attended by considerably less danger than a frank appeal to the right of the stronger, so far at least as the aristocratic party were concerned. For they had been taught a lesson not easily forgotten by the downfall of the oligarchies established in 411 and 404; and the second catastrophe especially proved that nothing but a popular government was possible in Athens. Accordingly, the nobles set themselves to study new methods for obtaining their ultimate end, which was always the possession of uncontrolled power over the lives and fortunes of their fellow-citizens. With wealth to purchase instruction from the Sophists, with leisure to practise oratory, and with the ability often accompanying high birth, there was no reason why the successors of Charmides and Critias should not enjoy all the pleasures of tyranny unaccompanied by any of its drawbacks. Here, again, a parallel suggests itself between ancient Greece and modern Europe. On the Continent, where theories of natural law are far more prevalent than with us, it is by brute force that justice is trampled down: the one great object of every ambitious

intriguer is to possess himself of the military machine, his one great terror, that a stronger man may succeed in wresting it from him; in England the political adventurer looks to rhetoric as his only resource, and at the pinnacle of power has to dread the hailstorm of epigrammatic invective directed against him by abler or younger rivals.[1]

Besides its influence on the formation and direction of political eloquence, the doctrine professed by Protagoras had a far-reaching effect on the subsequent development of thought. Just as Cynicism was evolved from the theory of Hippias, so also did the teaching which denied Nature and concentrated all study on subjective phenomena, with a tendency towards individualistic isolation, lead on to the system of Aristippus. The founder of the Cyrenaic school is called a Sophist by Aristotle, nor can the justice of the appellation be doubted. He was, it is true, a friend and companion of Socrates, but intellectually he is more nearly related to Protagoras. Aristippus rejected physical studies, reduced all knowledge to the consciousness of our own sensations, and made immediate gratification the end of life. Protagoras would have objected to the last principle, but it was only an extension of his own views, for all history proves that Hedonism is constantly associated with sensationalism. The theory that knowledge is built up out of feelings has an elective affinity for the theory that action is, or ought to be, determined in the last resort by the most prominent feelings, which are pleasure and pain. Both theories have since been strengthened by the introduction of a new and more ideal element into each. We have come to see that knowledge is constituted not by sensations alone, but by sensations grouped according to certain laws which seem to be inseparable from the existence of any consciousness whatever. And, similarly,

[1] Lord Beaconsfield recently [written in February 1880] spoke of the Balkans as forming an 'intelligible' frontier for Turkey. Continental telegrams substituted 'natural frontier.' The change was characteristic and significant.

we have learned to take into account, not merely the momentary enjoyments of an individual, but his whole life's happiness as well, and not his happiness only, but also that of the whole community to which he belongs. Nevertheless, in both cases it is rightly held that the element of feeling preponderates, and the doctrines of such thinkers as J. S. Mill are legitimately traceable through Epicurus and Aristippus to Protagoras as their first originator.

Notwithstanding the importance of this impulse, it does not represent the whole effect produced by Protagoras on philosophy. His eristic method was taken up by the Megaric school, and at first combined with other elements borrowed from Parmenides and Socrates, but ultimately extricated from them and used as a critical solvent of all dogmatism by the later Sceptics. From their writings, after a long interval of enforced silence, it passed over to Montaigne, Bayle, Hume, and Kant, with what redoubtable consequences to received opinions need not here be specified. Our object is simply to illustrate the continuity of thought, and the powerful influence exercised by ancient Greece on its subsequent development.

Every variety of opinion current among the Sophists reduces itself, in the last analysis, to their fundamental antithesis between Nature and Law, the latter being somewhat ambiguously conceived by its supporters as either human reason or human will, or more generally as both together, combining to assert their self-dependence and emancipation from external authority. This antithesis was prefigured in the distinction between Chthonian and Olympian divinities. Continuing afterwards to inspire the rivalry of opposing schools, Cynic against Cyrenaic, Stoic against Epicurean, Sceptic against Dogmatist, it was but partially overcome by the mediatorial schemes of Socrates and his successors. Then came Catholicism, equally adverse to the pretensions of either party, and held them down

under its suffocating pressure for more than a thousand years.

> 'Natur und Geist, so spricht man nicht zu Christen,
> Darum verbrennt man Atheisten;
> Natur ist Sünde, Geist ist Teufel.'

Both slowly struggled back into consciousness in the fitful dreams of mediaeval sleep. Nature was represented by astrology with its fatalistic predetermination of events; idealism by the alchemical lore which was to give its possessor eternal youth and inexhaustible wealth. With the complete revival of classic literature and the temporary neutralisation of theology by internal discord, both sprang up again in glorious life, and produced the great art of the sixteenth century, the great science and philosophy of the seventeenth. Later on, becoming self-conscious, they divide, and their partisans draw off into two opposing armies, Rousseau against Voltaire, Herder against Kant, Goethe against Schiller, Hume against himself. Together they bring about the Revolution; but after marching hand in hand to the destruction of all existing institutions they again part company, and, putting on the frippery of a dead faith, confront one another, each with its own ritual, its own acolytes, its own intolerance, with feasts of Nature and goddesses of Reason, in mutual and murderous hostility. When the storm subsided, new lines of demarcation were laid down, and the cause of political liberty was dissociated from what seemed to be thoroughly discredited figments. Nevertheless, imaginative literature still preserves traces of the old conflict, and on examining the four greatest English novelists of the last fifty years we shall find that Dickens and Charlotte Brontë, though personally most unlike, agree in representing the arbitrary, subjective, ideal side of life, the subjugation of things to self, not of self to things; he transfiguring them in the light of humour, fancy, sentiment; she transforming them by the alchemy of inward passion; while

Thackeray and George Eliot represent the triumph of natural forces over rebellious individualities; the one writer depicting an often crude reality at odds with convention and conceit; while the other, possessing, if not an intrinsically greater genius, at least a higher philosophical culture, discloses to us the primordial necessities of existence, the pitiless conformations of circumstance, before which egoism, ignorance, illusion, and indecision must bow, or be crushed to pieces if they resist.

VII.

Our readers have now before them everything of importance that is known about the Sophists, and something more that is not known for certain, but may, we think, be reasonably conjectured. Taking the whole class together, they represent a combination of three distinct tendencies, the endeavour to supply an encyclopaedic training for youth, the cultivation of political rhetoric as a special art, and the search after a scientific foundation for ethics derived from the results of previous philosophy. With regard to the last point, they agree in drawing a fundamental distinction between Nature and Law, but some take one and some the other for their guide. The partisans of Nature lean to the side of a more comprehensive education, while their opponents tend more and more to lay an exclusive stress on oratorical proficiency. Both schools are at last infected by the moral corruption of the day, natural right becoming identified with the interest of the stronger, and humanism leading to the denial of objective reality, the substitution of illusion for knowledge, and the confusion of momentary gratification with moral good. The dialectical habit of considering every question under contradictory aspects degenerates into eristic prize-fighting and deliberate disregard of the conditions which alone make argument possible. Finally, the component elements of Sophisti-

cism are dissociated from one another, and are either separately developed or pass over into new combinations. Rhetoric, apart from speculation, absorbs the whole time and talent of an Isocrates; general culture is imparted by a professorial class without originality, but without reproach; naturalism and sensuous idealism are worked up into systematic completion for the sake of their philosophical interest alone; and the name of sophistry is unhappily fastened by Aristotle on paid exhibitions of verbal wrangling which the great Sophists would have regarded with indignation and disgust.

It remains for us to glance at the controversy which has long been carried on respecting the true position of the Sophists in Greek life and thought. We have already alluded to the by no means favourable judgment passed on them by some among their contemporaries. Socrates condemned them severely, but only because they received payment for their lessons; and the sentiment was probably echoed by many who had neither his disinterestedness nor his frugality. To make profit by intellectual work was not unusual in Greece. Pheidias sold his statues; Pindar spent his life writing for money; Simonides and Sophocles were charged with showing too great eagerness in the pursuit of gain.[1] But a man's conversation with his friends had always been gratuitous, and the novel idea of charging a high fee for it excited considerable offence. Socrates called it prostitution —the sale of that which should be the free gift of love— without perhaps sufficiently considering that the same privilege had formerly been purchased with a more dishonourable price. He also considered that a freeman was degraded by placing himself at the beck and call of another, although it would appear that the Sophists chose their own time for lecturing, and were certainly not more slaves than a sculptor or poet who had received an order to execute. It was also argued that any one who really succeeded in improving the

[1] Aristoph., *Pax*, 697.

community benefited so much by the result that it was unfair on his part to demand any additional remuneration. Suppose a popular preacher were to come over from New York to England, star about among the principal cities, charging a high price for admission to his sermons, and finally return home in possession of a handsome fortune, we can well imagine that sarcasms at the expense of such profitable piety would not be wanting. This hypothetical case will help us to understand how many an honest Athenian must have felt towards the showy colonial strangers who were making such a lucrative business of teaching moderation and justice. Plato, speaking for his master but not from his master's standpoint, raised an entirely different objection. He saw no reason why the Sophists should not sell their wisdom if they had any wisdom to sell. But this was precisely what he denied. He submitted their pretensions to a searching cross-examination, and, as he considered, convicted them of being worthless pretenders. There was a certain unfairness about this method, for neither his own positive teaching nor that of Socrates could have stood before a similar test, as Aristotle speedily demonstrated in the next generation. He was, in fact, only doing for Protagoras and Gorgias what they had done for early Greek speculation, and what every school habitually does for its predecessors. It had yet to be learned that this dissolving dialectic constitutes the very law of philosophical progress. The discovery was made by Hegel, and it is to him that the Sophists owe their rehabilitation in modern times. His lectures on the History of Philosophy contain much that was afterwards urged by Grote on the same side. Five years before the appearance of Grote's famous sixty-seventh chapter, Lewes had also published a vindication of the Sophists, possibly suggested by Hegel's work, which he had certainly consulted when preparing his own History. There is, however, this great difference, that while the two English critics endeavour to minimise the

sceptical, innovating tendency of the Sophists, it is, contrariwise, brought into exaggerated prominence by the German philosopher. We have just remarked that the final dissolution of Sophisticism was brought about by the separate development given to each of the various tendencies which it temporarily combined. Now, each of our three apologists has taken up one of these tendencies, and treated it as constituting the whole movement under discussion. To Hegel, the Sophists are chiefly subjective idealists. To Lewes, they are rhetoricians like Isocrates. To Grote, they are, what in truth the Sophists of the Roman empire were, teachers representing the standard opinions of their age. Lewes and Grote are both particularly anxious to prove that the original Sophists did not corrupt Greek morality. Thus much has been conceded by contemporary German criticism, and is no more than was observed by Plato long ago. Grote further asserts that the implied corruption of morality is an illusion, and that at the end of the Peloponnesian war the Athenians were no worse than their forefathers who fought at Marathon. His opinion is shared by so accomplished a scholar as Prof. Jowett;[1] but here he has the combined authority of Thucydides, Aristophanes, and Plato against him. We have, however, examined this question already, and need not return to it. Whether any of the Sophists themselves can be proved to have taught immoral doctrines is another moot point. Grote defends them all, Pôlus and Thrasymachus included. Here, also, we have expressed our dissent from the eminent historian, whom we can only suppose to have missed the whole point of Plato's argument. Lewes takes different

[1] 'As Mr. Grote remarks, there is no reason to suspect any greater moral corruption in the age of Demosthenes than in the age of Pericles.' (*The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. IV., p. 380.) We do not remember that Grote commits himself to such a sweeping statement, nor was it necessary for his purpose to do so. No one would have been more surprised than Demosthenes himself to hear that the Athenians of his generation equalled the contemporaries of Pericles in public virtue. (Cf. Grote's *Plato*, II., 148.)

ground when he accuses Plato of misrepresenting his opponents. It is true that the Sophists cannot be heard in self-defence, but there is no internal improbability about the charges brought against them. The Greek rhetoricians are not accused of saying anything that has not been said again and again by their modern representatives. Whether the odium of such sentiments should attach itself to the whole class of Sophists is quite another question. Grote denies that they held any doctrine in common. The German critics, on the other hand, insist on treating them as a school with common principles and tendencies. Brandis calls them 'a number of men, gifted indeed, but not seekers after knowledge for its own sake, who made a trade of giving instruction as a means for the attainment of external and selfish ends, and of substituting mere technical proficiency for real science.'[1] If our account be the true one, this would apply to Gorgias and the younger rhetoricians alone. One does not precisely see what external or selfish ends were subserved by the physical philosophy which Prodicus and Hippias taught, nor why the comprehensive enquiries of Protagoras into the conditions of civilisation and the limits of human knowledge should be contemptuously flung aside because he made them the basis of an honourable profession. Zeller, in much the same strain, defines a Sophist as one who professes to be a teacher of wisdom, while his object is individual culture (die formelle und praktische Bildung des Subjekts) and not the scientific investigation of truth.[2] We do not know whether Grote was content with an explanation which would only have required an unimportant modification of his own statements to agree precisely with them. It ought amply to have satisfied Lewes. For ourselves, we must confess to caring very little whether the Sophists investigated truth for its own sake or as a means to self-culture. We believe, and in the next chapter we hope

[1] *Geschichte der Entwickelung der Griechischen Philosophie*, I., p. 204.
[2] *Philosophie d. Gr.*, I., p. 943 (3rd ed.).

to show, that Socrates, at any rate, did not treat knowledge apart from practice as an end in itself. But the history of philosophy is not concerned with such subtleties as these. Our contention is that the Stoic, Epicurean, and Sceptical schools may be traced back through Antisthenes and Aristippus to Hippias and Protagoras much more directly than to Socrates. If Zeller will grant this, then he can no longer treat Sophisticism as a mere solvent of the old physical philosophy. If he denies it, we can only appeal to his own history, which here, as well as in our discussions of early Greek thought, we have found more useful than any other work on the subject. Our obligations to Grote are of a more general character. We have learned from him to look at the Sophists without prejudice. But we think that he, too, underrates their far-reaching intellectual significance, while his defence of their moral orthodoxy seems, so far as certain members of the class are concerned, inconsistent with any belief in Plato's historical fidelity. That the most eminent Sophists did nothing to corrupt Greek morality is now almost universally admitted. If we have succeeded in showing that they did not corrupt but fruitfully develop Greek philosophy, the purpose of this study will have been sufficiently fulfilled.

The title of this chapter may have seemed to promise more than a casual mention of the thinker in whom Greek Humanism attained its loftiest and purest expression. But in history, no less than in life, Socrates must ever stand apart from the Sophists. Beyond and above all specialities of teaching, the transcendent dignity of a character which personified philosophy itself demands a separate treatment. Readers who have followed us thus far may feel interested in an attempt to throw some new light on one who was a riddle to his contemporaries, and has remained a riddle to after-ages.

CHAPTER III.

THE PLACE OF SOCRATES IN GREEK PHILOSOPHY.

I.

APART from legendary reputations, there is no name in the world's history more famous than that of Socrates, and in the history of philosophy there is none so famous. The only thinker that approaches him in celebrity is his own disciple Plato. Every one who has heard of Greece or Athens has heard of him. Every one who has heard of him knows that he was supremely good and great. Each successive generation has confirmed the reputed Delphic oracle that no man was wiser than Socrates. He, with one or two others, alone came near to realising the ideal of a Stoic sage. Christians deem it no irreverence to compare him with the Founder of their religion. If a few dissentient voices have broken the general unanimity, they have, whether consciously or not, been inspired by the Socratic principle that we should let no opinion pass unquestioned and unproved. Furthermore, it so happens that this wonderful figure is known even to the multitude by sight as well as by name. Busts, cameos, and engravings have made all familiar with the Silenus-like physiognomy, the thick lips, upturned nose, and prominent eyes which impressed themselves so strangely on the imagination of a race who are accused of having cared for nothing but physical beauty, because they rightly regarded it as the natural accompaniment of moral loveliness. Those who wish to discover what manner of mind lay hid beneath this uninviting

exterior may easily satisfy their curiosity, for Socrates is personally better known than any other character of antiquity. Dr. Johnson himself is not a more familiar figure to the student of literature. Alone among classical worthies his table-talk has been preserved for us, and the art of memoir-writing seems to have been expressly created for his behoof.[1] We can follow him into all sorts of company and test his behaviour in every variety of circumstances. He conversed with all classes and on all subjects of human interest, with artisans, artists, generals, statesmen, professors, and professional beauties. We meet him in the armourer's workshop, in the sculptor's studio, in the boudoirs of the *demi-monde*, in the banqueting-halls of flower-crowned and wine-flushed Athenian youth, combining the self-mastery of an Antisthenes with the plastic grace of an Aristippus ; or, in graver moments, cheering his comrades during the disastrous retreat from Delium ; upholding the sanctity of law, as President of the Assembly, against a delirious populace ; confronting with invincible irony the oligarchic terrorists who held life and death in their hands ; pleading not for himself, but for reason and justice, before a stupid and bigoted tribunal ; and, in the last sad scene of all, exchanging Attic courtesies with the unwilling instrument of his death.[2]

Such a character would, in any case, be remarkable ; it becomes of extraordinary, or rather of unique, interest when we consider that Socrates could be and do so much, not in spite of being a philosopher, but because he was a philosopher, the chief though not the sole originator of a vast intellectual revolution ; one who, as a teacher, constituted the supremacy

[1] The invention of memoir-writing is claimed by Prof. Mahaffy (*Hist. Gr. Lit.*, II., 42) for Ion of Chios and his contemporary Stesimbrotus. But—apart from their questionable authenticity—the sketches attributed to these two writers do not seem to have aimed at presenting a complete picture of a single individual, which is what was attempted with considerable success in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*.

[2] Cf. Havet, *Le Christianisme et ses Origines*, I., 167.

of reason, and as an individual made reason his sole guide in life. He at once discovered new principles, popularised them for the benefit of others, and exemplified them in his own conduct; but he did not accomplish these results separately; they were only different aspects of the same systematising process which is identical with philosophy itself. Yet the very success of Socrates in harmonising life and thought makes it the more difficult for us to construct a complete picture of his personality. Different observers have selected from the complex combination that which best suited their own mental predisposition, pushing out of sight the other elements which, with him, served to correct and complete it. The very popularity that has attached itself to his name is a proof of this; for the multitude can seldom appreciate more than one excellence at a time, nor is that usually of the highest order. Hegel complains that Socrates has been made the patron-saint of moral twaddle.[1] We are fifty years further removed than Hegel from the golden age of platitude; the twaddle of our own time is half cynical, half aesthetic, and wholly unmoral; yet there are no signs of diminution in the popular favour with which Socrates has always been regarded. The man of the world, the wit, the *viveur*, the enthusiastic admirer of youthful beauty, the scornful critic of democracy is welcome to many who have no taste for ethical discourses and fine-spun arguments.

Nor is it only the personality of Socrates that has been so variously conceived; his philosophy, so far as it can be separated from his life, has equally given occasion to conflicting interpretations, and it has even been denied that he had, properly speaking, any philosophy at all. These divergent presentations of his teaching, if teaching it can be called, begin with the two disciples to whom our knowledge of it is almost entirely due. There is, curiously enough, much the same inner discrepancy between Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and those

[1] *Gesch. d. Phil.*, II., 47.

Platonic dialogues where Socrates is the principal spokesman, as that which distinguishes the Synoptic from the Johannine Gospels. The one gives us a report certainly authentic, but probably incomplete; the other account is, beyond all doubt, a highly idealised portraiture, but seems to contain some traits directly copied from the original, which may well have escaped a less philosophical observer than Plato. Aristotle also furnishes us with some scanty notices which are of use in deciding between the two rival versions, although we cannot be sure that he had access to any better sources of information than are open to ourselves. By variously combining and reasoning from these data modern critics have produced a third Socrates, who is often little more than the embodiment of their own favourite opinions.

In England, the most generally accepted method seems to be that followed by Grote. This consists in taking the Platonic *Apologia* as a sufficiently faithful report of the defence actually made by Socrates on his trial, and piecing it on to the details supplied by Xenophon, or at least to as many of them as can be made to fit, without too obvious an accommodation of their meaning. If, however, we ask on what grounds a greater historical credibility is attributed to the *Apologia* than to the *Republic* or the *Phaedo*, none can be offered except the seemingly transparent truthfulness of the narrative itself, an argument which will not weigh much with those who remember how brilliant was Plato's talent for fiction, and how unscrupulously it could be employed for purposes of edification. The *Phaedo* puts an autobiographical statement into the mouth of Socrates which we only know to be imaginary because it involves the acceptance of a theory unknown to the real Socrates. Why, then, may not Plato have thought proper to introduce equally fictitious details into the speech delivered by his master before the dicastery, if, indeed, the speech, as we have it, be not a fancy composition from beginning to end?

Before we can come to a decision on this point it will be necessary briefly to recapitulate the statements in question. Socrates is defending himself against a capital charge. He fears that a prejudice respecting him may exist in the minds of the jury, and tries to explain how it arose without any fault of his, as follows:—A certain friend of his had asked the oracle at Delphi whether there was any man wiser than Socrates? The answer was that no man was wiser. Not being conscious of possessing any wisdom, great or small, he felt considerably surprised on hearing of this declaration, and thought to convince the god of falsehood by finding out some one wiser than himself. He first went to an eminent politician, who, however, proved, on examination, to be utterly ignorant, with the further disadvantage that it was impossible to convince him of his ignorance. On applying the same test to others a precisely similar result was obtained. It was only the handicraftsmen who could give a satisfactory account of themselves, and their knowledge of one trade made them fancy that they understood everything else equally well. Thus the meaning of the oracle was shown to be that God alone is truly wise, and that of all men he is wisest who, like Socrates, perceives that human wisdom is worth little or nothing. Ever since then, Socrates has made it his business to vindicate the divine veracity by seeking out and exposing every pretender to knowledge that he can find, a line of conduct which has made him extremely unpopular in Athens, while it has also won him a great reputation for wisdom, as people supposed that the matters on which he convicted others of ignorance were perfectly clear to himself.

The first difficulty that strikes one in connexion with this extraordinary story arises out of the oracle on which it all hinges. Had such a declaration been really made by the Pythia, would not Xenophon have eagerly quoted it as a proof of the high favour in which his hero stood with the

gods?[1] And how could Socrates have acquired so great a reputation before entering on the cross-examining career which alone made him conscious of any superiority over other men, and had alone won the admiration of his fellow-citizens? Our doubts are still further strengthened when we find that the historical Socrates did not by any means profess the sweeping scepticism attributed to him by Plato. So far from believing that ignorance was the common and necessary lot of all mankind, himself included, he held that action should, so far as possible, be entirely guided by knowledge;[2] that the man who did not always know what he was about resembled a slave; that the various virtues were only different forms of knowledge; that he himself possessed this knowledge, and was perfectly competent to share it with his friends. We do, indeed, find him very ready to convince ignorant and presumptuous persons of their deficiencies, but only that he may lead them, if well disposed, into the path of right understanding. He also thought that there were certain secrets which would remain for ever inaccessible to the human intellect, facts connected with the structure of the universe which the gods had reserved for their own exclusive cognisance. This, however, was, according to him, a kind of knowledge which, even if it could be obtained, would not be particularly worth having, and the search after which would leave us no leisure for more useful acquisitions. Nor does the Platonic Socrates seem to have been at the trouble of arguing against natural science. The subjects of his elenchus are the professors of such arts as politics, rhetoric, and poetry. Further, we have something stronger than a simple inference from the facts recorded by Xenophon; we have his express testimony to the fact that Socrates did not

[1] The oracle quoted in the *Apologia Socratis* attributed to Xenophon praises Socrates not for wisdom but for independence, justice, and temperance. Moreover, the work in question is held to be spurious by nearly every critic.

[2] *Mem.*, IV., vi., 1.

limit himself to confuting people who fancied they knew everything; here we must either have a direct reference to the *Apologia*, or to a theory identical with that which it embodies. Some stress has been laid on a phrase quoted by Xenophon himself as having been used by Hippias, which at first sight seems to support Plato's view. The Elian Sophist charges Socrates with practising a continual irony, refuting others and not submitting to be questioned himself;[1] an accusation which, we may observe in passing, is not borne out by the discussion that subsequently takes place between them. Here, however, we must remember that Socrates used to convey instruction under the form of a series of leading questions, the answers to which showed that his interlocutor understood and assented to the doctrine propounded. Such a method might easily give rise to the misconception that he refused to disclose his own particular opinions, and contented himself with eliciting those held by others. Finally, it is to be noted that the idea of fulfilling a religious mission, or exposing human ignorance *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, on which Grote lays such stress, has no place in Xenophon's conception of his master, although, had such an idea been really present, one can hardly imagine how it could have been passed over by a writer with whom piety amounted to superstition. It is, on the other hand, an idea which would naturally occur to a great religious reformer who proposed to base his reconstruction of society on faith in a supernatural order, and the desire to realise it here below.

So far we have contrasted the *Apologia* with the *Memorabilia*. We have now to consider in what relation it stands to Plato's other writings. The constructive dogmatic Socrates, who is a principal spokesman in some of them, differs widely from the sceptical Socrates of the famous *Defence*, and the difference has been urged as an argument for the historical authenticity of the latter.[2] Plato, it is implied, would not

[1] *Mem.*, IV., iv., 10. [2] Zeller, *Ph. d. Gr.*, II., a, 103, note 3 *sub fin.*

have departed so far from his usual conception of the sage, had he not been desirous of reproducing the actual words spoken on so solemn an occasion. There are, however, several dialogues which seem to have been composed for the express purpose of illustrating the negative method supposed to have been described by Socrates to his judges, investigations the sole result of which is to upset the theories of other thinkers, or to show that ordinary men act without being able to assign a reason for their conduct. Even the *Republic* is professedly tentative in its procedure, and only follows out a train of thought which has presented itself almost by accident to the company. Unlike Charles Lamb's Scotchman, the leading spokesman does not bring, but find, and you are invited to cry halves to whatever turns up in his company.

Plato had, in truth, a conception of science which no knowledge then attained—perhaps one may add, no knowledge ever attainable—could completely satisfy. Even the rigour of mathematical demonstration did not content him, for mathematical truth itself rested on unproved assumptions, as we also, by the way, have lately discovered. Perhaps the Hegelian system would have fulfilled his requirements; perhaps not even that. Moreover, that the new order which he contemplated might be established, it was necessary to begin by making a clean sweep of all existing opinions. With the urbanity of an Athenian, the piety of a disciple, and the instinct of a great dramatic artist, he preferred to assume that this indispensable task had already been done by another. And of all preceding thinkers, who was so well qualified for the undertaking as Socrates? Who else had wielded the weapons of negative dialectic with such consummate dexterity? Who had assumed such a critical attitude towards the beliefs of his contemporaries? Who had been so anxious to find a point of attachment for every new truth in the minds of his interlocutors? Who therefore could, with such

plausibility, be put forward in the guise of one who laid claim to no wisdom on his own account? The son of Phaenarete seemed made to be the Baptist of a Greek Messiah; but Plato, in treating him as such, has drawn a discreet veil over the whole positive side of his predecessor's teaching, and to discover what this was we must place ourselves under the guidance of Xenophon's more faithful report.

Not that Xenophon is to be taken as a perfectly accurate exponent of the Socratic philosophy. His work, it must be remembered, was primarily intended to vindicate Socrates from a charge of impiety and immoral teaching, not to expound a system which he was perhaps incompetent to appreciate or understand. We are bound to accept everything that he relates; we are bound to include nothing that he does not relate; but we may fairly readjust the proportions of his sketch. It is here that a judicious use of Plato will furnish us with the most valuable assistance. He grasped Socratism in all its parts and developed it in all directions, so that by following back the lines of his system to their origin we shall be put on the proper track and shall know where to look for the suggestions which were destined to be so magnificently worked out.[1]

[1] It may possibly be asked, Why, if Plato gave only an ideal picture of Socrates, are we to accept his versions of the Sophistic teaching as literally exact? The answer is that he was compelled, by the nature of the case, to create an imaginary Socrates, while he could have no conceivable object in ascribing views which he did not himself hold to well-known historical personages. Assuming an unlimited right of making fictitious statements for the public good, his principles would surely not have permitted him wantonly to calumniate his innocent contemporaries by foisting on them odious theories for which they were not responsible. Had nobody held such opinions as those attributed to Thrasymachus in the *Republic* there would have been no object in attacking them; and if anybody held them, why not Thrasymachus as well as another? With regard to the veracity of the *Apologia*, Grote, in his work on Plato (I. 291), quotes a passage from Aristeides the rhetor, stating that all the companions of Socrates agreed about the Delphic oracle, and the Socratic disclaimer of knowledge. This, however, proves too much, for it shows that Aristeides quite overlooked the absence of any reference to either point in Xenophon, and therefore cannot be trusted to give an accurate report of the other authorities.

II.

Before entering on our task of reconstruction, we must turn aside to consider with what success the same enterprise has been attempted by modern German criticism, especially by its chief contemporary representative, the last and most distinguished historian of Greek philosophy. The result at which Zeller, following Schleiermacher, arrives is that the great achievement of Socrates was to put forward an adequate idea of knowledge; in other words, to show what true science ought to be, and what, as yet, it had never been, with the addition of a demand that all action should be based on such a scientific knowledge as its only sure foundation.[1] To know a thing was to know its essence, its concept, the assemblage of qualities which together constitute its definition, and make it to be what it is. Former thinkers had also sought for knowledge, but not *as* knowledge, not with a clear notion of what it was that they really wanted. Socrates, on the other hand, required that men should always be prepared to give a strict account of the end which they had in view, and of the means by which they hoped to gain it. Further, it had been customary to single out for exclusive attention that quality of an object by which the observer happened to be most strongly impressed, passing over all the others; the consequence of which was that the philosophers had taken a one-sided view of facts, with the result of falling into hopeless disagreement among themselves; the Sophists had turned these contradictory points of view against one another, and thus effected their mutual destruction; while the dissolution of objective certainty had led to a corresponding dissolution of moral truth. Socrates accepts the Sophistic scepticism so far as it applies to the existing state of science, but does not push it to the same fatal con-

[1] *Ph. d. Gr.*, II., a, 93 ff

clusion ; he grants that current beliefs should be thoroughly sifted and, if necessary, discarded, but only that more solid convictions may be substituted for them. Here a place is found for his method of self-examination, and for the self-conscious ignorance attributed to him by Plato. Comparing his notions on particular subjects with his idea of what knowledge in general ought to be, he finds that they do not satisfy it ; he knows that he knows nothing. He then has recourse to other men who declare that they possess the knowledge of which he is in search, but their pretended certainty vanishes under the application of his dialectic test. This is the famous Socratic irony. Finally, he attempts to come at real knowledge, that is to say, the construction of definitions, by employing that inductive method with the invention of which he is credited by Aristotle. This method consists in bringing together a number of simple and familiar examples from common experience, generalising from them, and correcting the generalisations by comparison with negative instances. The reasons that led Socrates to restrict his enquiries to human interests are rather lightly passed over by Zeller ; he seems at a loss how to reconcile the alleged reform of scientific method with the complete abandonment of those physical investigations which, we are told, had suffered so severely from being cultivated on a different system.

There seem to be three principal points aimed at in the very ingenious theory which we have endeavoured to summarise as adequately as space would permit. Zeller apparently wishes to bring Socrates into line with the great tradition of early Greek thought, to distinguish him markedly from the Sophists, and to trace back to his initiative the intellectual method of Plato and Aristotle. We cannot admit that the threefold attempt has succeeded. It seems to us that a picture into which so much Platonic colouring has been thrown would for that reason alone, and without any further objection, be open to very grave suspicion. But even accepting the historical accuracy of everything that Plato has

said, or of as much as may be required, our critic's inferences are not justified by his authorities. Neither the Xenophontic nor the Platonic Socrates seeks knowledge for its own sake, nor does either of them offer a satisfactory definition of knowledge, or, indeed, any definition at all. Aristotle was the first to explain what science meant, and he did so, not by developing the Socratic notion, but by incorporating it with the other methods independently struck out by physical philosophy. What would science be without the study of causation? and was not this ostentatiously neglected by the founder of conceptualism? Again, Plato, in the *Theaetêtus*, makes his Socrates criticise various theories of knowledge, but does not even hint that the critic had himself a better theory than any of them in reserve. The author of the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* was less interested in reforming the methods of scientific investigation than in directing research towards that which he believed to be alone worth knowing, the eternal ideas which underlie phenomena. The historical Socrates had no suspicion of transcendental realities; but he thought that a knowledge of physics was unattainable, and would be worthless if attained. By knowledge he meant art rather than science, and his method of defining was intended not for the latter but for the former. Those, he said, who can clearly express what they want to do are best secured against failure, and best able to communicate their skill to others. He made out that the various virtues were different kinds of knowledge, not from any extraordinary opinion of its preciousness, but because he thought that knowledge was the variable element in volition and that everything else was constant. Zeller dwells strongly on the Socratic identification of cognition with conduct; but how could anyone who fell at the first step into such a confusion of ideas be fitted either to explain what science meant or to come forward as the reformer of its methods? Nor is it correct to say that Socrates approached an object from every point of view, and took note of all its characteristic qualities. On the contrary, one would

be inclined to charge him with the opposite tendency, with fixing his gaze too exclusively on some one quality, that to him, as a teacher, was the most interesting. His identification of virtue with knowledge is an excellent instance of this habit. So also is his identification of beauty with serviceableness, and his general disposition to judge of everything by a rather narrow standard of utility. On the other hand, Greek physical speculation would have gained nothing by a minute attention to definitions, and most probably would have been mischievously hampered by it. Aristotle, at any rate, prefers the method of Democritus to the method of Plato; and Aristotle himself is much nearer the truth when he follows on the Ionian or Sicilian track than when he attempts to define what in the then existing state of knowledge could not be satisfactorily defined. To talk about the various elements—earth, air, fire, and water—as things with which everybody was already familiar, may have been a crude unscientific procedure; to analyse them into different combinations of the hot and the cold, the light and the heavy, the dry and the moist, was not only erroneous but fatally misleading; it was arresting enquiry, and doing precisely what the Sophists had been accused of doing, that is, substituting the conceit for the reality of wisdom. It was, no doubt, necessary that mathematical terms should be defined; but where are we told that geometricians had to learn this truth from Socrates? The sciences of quantity, which could hardly have advanced a step without the help of exact conceptions, were successfully cultivated before he was born, and his influence was used to discourage rather than to promote their accurate study. With regard to the comprehensive all-sided examination of objects on which Zeller lays so much stress, and which he seems to regard as something peculiar to the conceptual method, it had unquestionably been neglected by Parmenides and Heracleitus; but had not the deficiency been already made good by their immediate successors? What else is the

philosophy of Empedocles, the Atomists, and Anaxagoras, but an attempt—we must add, a by no means unsuccessful attempt—to recombine the opposing aspects of Nature which had been too exclusively insisted on at Ephesus and Elea? Again, to say that the Sophists had destroyed physical speculation by setting these partial aspects of truth against one another is, in our opinion, equally erroneous. First of all, Zeller here falls into the old mistake, long ago corrected by Grote, of treating the class in question as if they all held similar views. We have shown in the preceding chapter, if indeed it required to be shown, that the Sophists were divided into two principal schools, of which one was devoted to the cultivation of physics. Protagoras and Gorgias were the only sceptics; and it was not by setting one theory against another, but by working out a single theory to its last consequences, that their scepticism was reached; with no more effect, be it observed, than was exercised by Pyrrho on the science of his day. For the two great thinkers, with the aid of whose conclusions it was attempted to discredit objective reality, were already left far behind at the close of the fifth century; and neither their reasonings nor reasonings based on theirs, could exercise much influence on a generation which had Anaxagoras on Nature and the encyclopaedia of Democritus in its hands. There was, however, one critic who really did what the Sophists are charged with doing; who derided and denounced physical science on the ground that its professors were hopelessly at issue with one another; and this critic was no other than Socrates himself. He maintained, on purely popular and superficial grounds, the same sceptical attitude to which Protagoras gave at least the semblance of a psychological justification. And he wished that attention should be concentrated on the very subjects which Protagoras undertook to teach—namely, ethics, politics, and dialectics. Once more, to say that Socrates was conscious of not coming up to his own

standard of true knowledge is inconsistent with Xenophon's account, where he is represented as quite ready to answer every question put to him, and to offer a definition of everything that he considered worth defining. His scepticism, if it ever existed, was as artificial and short-lived as the scepticism of Descartes.

The truth is that no man who philosophised at all was ever more free from tormenting doubts and self-questionings; no man was ever more thoroughly satisfied with himself than Socrates. Let us add that, from a Hellenic point of view, no man had ever more reason for self-satisfaction. None, he observed in his last days, had ever lived a better or a happier life. Naturally possessed of a powerful constitution, he had so strengthened it by habitual moderation and constant training that up to the hour of his death, at the age of seventy, he enjoyed perfect bodily and mental health. Neither hardship nor exposure, neither abstinence nor indulgence in what to other men would have been excess, could make any impression on that adamantine frame. We know not how much truth there may be in the story that, at one time, he was remarkable for the violence of his passions; at any rate, when our principal informants knew him he was conspicuous for the ease with which he resisted temptation, and for the imperturbable sweetness of his temper. His wants, being systematically reduced to a minimum, were easily satisfied, and his cheerfulness never failed. He enjoyed Athenian society so much that nothing but military duty could draw him away from it. For Socrates was a veteran who had served through three arduous campaigns, and could give lectures on the duties of a general, which so high an authority as Xenophon thought worth reporting. He seems to have been on excellent terms with his fellow-citizens, never having been engaged in a lawsuit, either as plaintiff or defendant, until the fatal prosecution which brought his career to a close. He could, on that occasion, refuse to prepare a defence, proudly observing that his whole

life had been a preparation, that no man had ever seen him commit an unjust or impious deed. The anguished cries of doubt uttered by Italian and Sicilian thinkers could have no meaning for one who, on principle, abstained from ontological speculations; the uncertainty of human destiny which hung like a thunder-cloud over Pindar and the tragic poets had melted away under the sunshine of arguments, demonstrating, to his satisfaction, the reality and beneficence of a supernatural Providence. For he believed that the gods would afford guidance in doubtful conjunctures to all who approached their oracles in a reverent spirit; while, over and above the Divine counsels accessible to all men, he was personally attended by an oracular voice, a mysterious monitor, which told him what to avoid, though not what to do, a circumstance well worthy of note, for it shows that he did not, like Plato, attribute every kind of right action to divine inspiration.

It may be said that all this only proves Socrates to have been, in his own estimation, a good and happy, but not necessarily a wise man. With him, however, the last of these conditions was inseparable from the other two. He was prepared to demonstrate, step by step, that his conduct was regulated by fixed and ascertainable principles, and was of the kind best adapted to secure happiness both for himself and for others. That there were deficiencies in his ethical theory may readily be admitted. The idea of universal beneficence seems never to have dawned on his horizon; and chastity was to him what sobriety is to us, mainly a self-regarding virtue. We do not find that he ever recommended conjugal fidelity to husbands; he regarded prostitution very much as it is still, unhappily, regarded by men of the world among ourselves; and in opposing the darker vices of his countrymen, it was the excess rather than the perversion of appetite which he condemned. These, however, are points which do not interfere with our general contention that Socrates adopted the ethical standard of his time, that he adopted it on rational

grounds, that having adopted he acted up to it, and that in so reasoning and acting he satisfied his own ideal of absolute wisdom.

Even as regards physical phenomena, Socrates, so far from professing complete ignorance, held a very positive theory which he was quite ready to share with his friends. He taught what is called the doctrine of final causes; and, so far as our knowledge goes, he was either the first to teach it, or, at any rate, the first to prove the existence of divine agencies by its means. The old poets had occasionally attributed the origin of man and other animals to supernatural intelligence, but, apparently, without being led to their conviction by any evidence of design displayed in the structure of organised creatures. Socrates, on the other hand, went through the various external organs of the human body with great minuteness, and showed, to his own satisfaction, that they evinced the workings of a wise and beneficent Artist. We shall have more to say further on about this whole argument; here we only wish to observe that, intrinsically, it does not differ very much from the speculations which its author derided as the fruit of an impertinent curiosity; and that no one who now employed it would, for a single moment, be called an agnostic or a sceptic.

Must we, then, conclude that Socrates was, after all, nothing but a sort of glorified Greek Paley, whose principal achievement was to present the popular ideas of his time on morals and politics under the form of a rather grovelling utilitarianism; and whose 'evidences of natural and revealed religion' bore much the same relation to Greek mythology as the corresponding lucubrations of the worthy archdeacon bore to Christian theology? Even were this the whole truth, it should be remembered that there was an interval of twenty-three centuries between the two teachers, which ought to be taken due account of in estimating their relative importance. Socrates, with his closely-reasoned, vividly-illustrated ethical

expositions, had gained a tactical advantage over the vague declamations of Gnomic poetry and the isolated aphorisms of the Seven Sages, comparable to that possessed by Xenophon and his Ten Thousand in dealing with the unwieldy masses of Persian infantry and the undisciplined mountaineers of Carduchia; while his idea of a uniformly beneficent Creator marked a still greater advance on the jealous divinities of Herodotus. On the other hand, as against Hume and Bentham, Paley's pseudo-scientific paraphernalia were like the muskets and cannon of an Asiatic army when confronted by the English conquerors of India. Yet had Socrates done no more than contributed to philosophy the idea just alluded to, his place in the evolution of thought, though honourable, would not have been what it is justly held to be—unique.

III.

So far we have been occupied in disputing the views of others; it is now time that our own view should be stated. We maintain, then, that Socrates first brought out the idea, not of knowledge, but of mind in its full significance; that he first studied the whole circle of human interests as affected by mind; that, in creating dialectics, he gave this study its proper method, and simultaneously gave his method the only subject-matter on which it could be profitably exercised; finally, that by these immortal achievements philosophy was constituted, and received a threefold verification—first, from the life of its founder; secondly, from the success with which his spirit was communicated to a band of followers; thirdly, from the whole subsequent history of thought. Before substantiating these assertions point by point, it will be expedient to glance at the external influences which may be supposed to have moulded the great intellect and the great character now under consideration.

Socrates was, before all things, an Athenian. To under-

stand him we must first understand what the Athenian character was in itself and independently of disturbing circumstances. Our estimate of that character is too apt to be biassed by the totally exceptional position which Athens occupied during the fifth century B.C. The possession of empire developed qualities in her children which they had not exhibited at an earlier period, and which they ceased to exhibit when empire had been lost. Among these must be reckoned military genius, an adventurous and romantic spirit, and a high capacity for poetical and artistic production—qualities displayed, it is true, by every Greek race, but by some for a longer and by others for a shorter period. Now, the tradition of greatness does not seem to have gone very far back with Athens. Her legendary history, what we have of it, is singularly unexciting. The same rather monotonous though edifying story of shelter accorded to persecuted fugitives, of successful resistance to foreign invasions, and of devoted self-sacrifice to the State, meets us again and again. The Attic drama itself shows how much more stirring was the legendary lore of other tribes. One need only look at the few remaining pieces which treat of patriotic subjects to appreciate the difference; and an English reader may easily convince himself of it by comparing Mr. Swinburne's *Erechtheus* with the same author's *Atalanta*. There is a want of vivid individuality perceptible all through. Even Theseus, the great national hero, strikes one as a rather tame sort of personage compared with Perseus, Heraclês, and Jason. No Athenian figures prominently in the *Iliad*; and on the only two occasions when Pindar was employed to commemorate an Athenian victory at the Panhellenic games, he seems unable to associate it with any legendary glories in the past. The circumstances which for a long time made Attic history so barren of incident are the same to which its subsequent importance is due. The relation in which Attica stood to the rest of Greece was somewhat similar to the relation in

which Tuscany, long afterwards, stood to the rest of Italy. It was the region least disturbed by foreign immigration, and therefore became the seat of a slower but steadier mental development. It was among those to whom war, revolution, colonisation, and commerce brought the most many-sided experience that intellectual activity was most speedily ripened. Literature, art, and science were cultivated with extraordinary success by the Greek cities of Asia Minor, and even in some parts of the old country, before Athens had a single man of genius, except Solon, to boast of. But along with the enjoyment of undisturbed tranquillity, habits of self-government, orderliness, and reasonable reflection were establishing themselves, which finally enabled her to inherit all that her predecessors in the race had accomplished, and to add, what alone they still wanted, the crowning consecration of self-conscious mind. There had, simultaneously, been growing up an intensely patriotic sentiment, due, in part, to the long-continued independence of Attica; in part, also, we may suppose, to the union, at a very early period, of her different townships into a single city. The same causes had, however, also favoured a certain love of comfort, a jovial pleasure-seeking disposition often degenerating into coarse sensuality, a thriftiness, and an inclination to grasp at any source of profit, coupled with extreme credulity where hopes of profit were excited, together forming an element of prose-comedy which mingles strangely with the tragic grandeur of Athens in her imperial age, and emerges into greater prominence after her fall, until it becomes the predominant characteristic of her later days. It is, we may observe, the contrast between these two aspects of Athenian life which gives the plays of Aristophanes their unparalleled comic effect, and it is their very awkward conjunction which makes Euripides so unequal and disappointing a poet. We find, then, that the original Athenian character is marked by reasonable reflection, by patriotism, and by a tendency towards self-seeking

materialism. Let us take note of these three qualities, for we shall meet with them again in the philosophy of Socrates.

Empire, when it came to Athens, came almost unsought. The Persian invasions had made her a great naval power; the free choice of her allies placed her at the head of a great maritime confederacy. The sudden command of vast resources and the tension accumulated during ages of repose, stimulated all her faculties into preternatural activity. Her spirit was steeled almost to the Dorian temper, and entered into victorious rivalry with the Dorian Muse. Not only did her fleet sweep the sea, but her army, for once, defeated Theban hoplites in the field. The grand choral harmonies of Sicilian song, the Sicyonian recitals of epic adventure, were rolled back into a framework for the spectacle of individual souls meeting one another in argument, expostulation, entreaty, and defiance; a nobler Doric edifice rose to confront the Aeginetan temple of Athênê; the strained energy of Aeginetan combatants was relaxed into attitudes of reposing power, and the eternal smile on their faces was deepened into the sadness of unfathomable thought. But to the violet-crowned city, Athênê was a giver of wealth and wisdom rather than of prowess; her empire rested on the contributions of unwilling allies, and on a technical proficiency which others were sure to equal in time; so that the Corinthian orators could say with justice that Athenian skill was more easily acquired than Dorian valour. At once receptive and communicative, Athens absorbed all that Greece could teach her, and then returned it in a more elaborate form, but without the freshness of its earliest inspiration. Yet there was one field that still afforded scope for creative originality. Habits of analysis, though fatal to spontaneous production, were favourable, or rather were necessary, to the growth of a new philosophy. After the exhaustion of every limited idealism, there remained that highest idealisation which is the reduction of all past experience to a method available for the guidance

of all future action. To accomplish this last enterprise it was necessary that a single individual should gather up in himself the spirit diffused through a whole people, bestowing on it by that very concentration the capability of an infinitely wider extension when its provisional representative should have passed away from the scene.

Socrates represents the popular Athenian character much as Richardson, in a different sphere, represents the English middle-class character—represents it, that is to say, elevated into transcendent genius. Except this elevation, there was nothing anomalous about him. If he was exclusively critical, rationalising, unadventurous, prosaic ; in a word, as the German historians say, something of a Philistine ; so, we may suspect, were the mass of his countrymen. His illustrations were taken from such plebeian employments as cattle-breeding, cobbling, weaving, and sailoring. These were his 'touches of things common' which at last 'rose to touch the spheres.' He both practised and inculcated virtues, the value of which is especially evident in humble life—frugality and endurance. But he also represents the Dêmos in its sovereign capacity as legislator and judge. Without aspiring to be an orator or statesman, he reserves the ultimate power of arbitration and election. He submits candidates for office to a severe scrutiny, and demands from all men an even stricter account of their lives than retiring magistrates had to give of their conduct, when in power, to the people. He applies the judicial method of cross-examination to the detection of error, and the parliamentary method of joint deliberation to the discovery of truth. He follows out the democratic principles of free speech and self-government, by submitting every question that arises to public discussion, and insisting on no conclusion that does not command the willing assent of his audience. Finally, his conversation, popular in form, was popular also in this respect, that everybody who chose to listen might have the

benefit of it gratuitously. Here we have a great change from the scornful dogmatism of Heracleitus, and the virtually oligarchic exclusiveness of the teachers who demanded high fees for their instruction.

To be free and to rule over freemen were, with Socrates, as with every Athenian, the goals of ambition, only his freedom meant absolute immunity from the control of passion or habit; government meant superior knowledge, and government of freemen meant the power of producing intellectual conviction. In his eyes, the possessor of any art was, so far, a ruler, and the only true ruler, being obeyed under severe penalties by all who stood in need of his skill. But the royal art which he himself exercised, without expressly laying claim to it, was that which assigns its proper sphere to every other art, and provides each individual with the employment which his peculiar faculties demand. This is Athenian liberty and Athenian imperialism carried into education, but so idealised and purified that they can hardly be recognised at first sight.

The philosophy of Socrates is more obviously related to the practical and religious tendencies of his countrymen. Neither he nor they had any sympathy with the cosmological speculations which seemed to be unconnected with human interests, and to trench on matters beyond the reach of human knowledge. The old Attic sentiment was averse from adventures of any kind, whether political or intellectual. Yet the new spirit of enquiry awakened by Ionian thought could not fail to react powerfully on the most intelligent man among the most intelligent people of Hellas. Above all, one paramount idea which went beyond the confines of the old philosophy had been evolved by the differentiation of knowledge from its object, and had been presented, although under a materialising form, by Anaxagoras to the Athenian public. Socrates took up this idea, which expressed what was highest and most distinctive in the national

character, and applied it to the development of ethical speculation. We have seen, in the last chapter, how an attempt was made to base moral truth on the results of natural philosophy, and how that attempt was combated by the Humanistic school. It could not be doubtful which side Socrates would take in this controversy. That he paid any attention to the teaching of Protagoras and Gorgias is, indeed, highly problematic, for their names are never mentioned by Xenophon, and the Platonic dialogues in which they figure are evidently fictitious. Nevertheless, he had to a certain extent arrived at the same conclusion with them, although by a different path. He was opposed, on religious grounds, to the theories which an acute psychological analysis had led them to reject. Accordingly, the idea of Nature is almost entirely absent from his conversation, and, like Protagoras, he is guided solely by regard for human interests. To the objection that positive laws were always changing, he victoriously replied that it was because they were undergoing an incessant adaptation to varying needs.[1] Like Protagoras, again, he was a habitual student of old Greek literature, and sedulously sought out the practical lessons in which it abounded. To him, as to the early poets and sages, Sôphrosynê, or self-knowledge and self-command taken together, was the first and most necessary of all virtues. Unlike them, however, he does not simply accept it from tradition, but gives it a philosophical foundation—the newly-established distinction between mind and body ; a distinction not to be confounded with the old Psychism, although Plato, for his reforming purposes, shortly afterwards linked the two together. The disembodied spirit of mythology was a mere shadow or memory, equally destitute of solidity and of understanding ; with Socrates, mind meant the personal consciousness which retains its continuous identity through every change, and as against every passing impulse. Like

[1] In the conversation with Hippias already referred to.

the Humanists, he made it the seat of knowledge—more than the Humanists, he gave it the control of appetite. In other words, he adds the idea of will to that of intellect; but instead of treating them as distinct faculties or functions, he absolutely identifies them. Mind having come to be first recognised as a knowing power, carried over its association with knowledge into the volitional sphere, and the two were first disentangled by Aristotle, though very imperfectly even by him. Yet no thinker helped so much to make the confusion apparent as the one to whom it was due. Socrates deliberately insisted that those who knew the good must necessarily be good themselves. He taught that every virtue was a science; courage, for example, was a knowledge of the things which should or should not be feared; temperance, a knowledge of what should or should not be desired, and so forth. Such an account of virtue would, perhaps, be sufficient if all men did what, in their opinion, they ought to do; and, however strange it may seem, Socrates assumed that such was actually the case.[1] The paradox, even if accepted at the moment by his youthful friends, was sure to be rejected, on examination, by cooler heads, and its rejection would prove that the whole doctrine was essentially unsound. Various causes prevented Socrates from perceiving what seemed so clear to duller intelligences than his. First of all, he did not separate duty from personal interest. A true Athenian, he recommended temperance and righteousness very largely on account of the material advantages they secured. That the agreeable and the honourable, the expedient and the just, frequently came into collision, was at that time a rhetorical commonplace; and it might be supposed that, if they were shown to coincide, no motive to misconduct but ignorance could exist. Then, again, being accustomed to compare conduct of every kind with the practice of such arts as flute-playing, he had come to take knowledge in a rather extended

[1] *Mem.*, III., ix., 4.

sense, just as we do when we say, indifferently, that a man knows geometry and that he knows how to draw. Aristotle himself did not see more clearly than Socrates that moral habits are only to be acquired by incessant practice ; only the earlier thinker would have observed that knowledge of every kind is gained by the same laborious repetition of particular actions. To the obvious objection that, in this case, morality cannot, like theoretical truth, be imparted by the teacher to his pupils, but must be won by the learner for himself, he would probably have replied that all truth is really evolved by the mind from itself, and that he, for that very reason, disclaimed the name of a teacher, and limited himself to the seemingly humbler task of awakening dormant capacities in others.

An additional influence, not the less potent because unacknowledged, was the same craving for a principle of unity that had impelled early Greek thought to seek for the sole substance or cause of physical phenomena in some single material element, whether water, air, or fire ; and just as these various principles were finally decomposed into the multitudinous atoms of Leucippus, so also, but much more speedily, did the general principle of knowledge tend to decompose itself into innumerable cognitions of the partial ends or utilities which action was directed to achieve. The need of a comprehensive generalisation again made itself felt, and all good was summed up under the head of happiness. The same difficulties recurred under another form. To define happiness proved not less difficult than to define use or practical knowledge. Three points of view offered themselves, and all three had been more or less anticipated by Socrates. Happiness might mean unmixed pleasure, or the exclusive cultivation of man's higher nature, or voluntary subordination to a larger whole. The founder of Athenian philosophy used to present each of these, in turn, as an end, without recognising the possibility of a conflict between

them; and it certainly would be a mistake to represent them as constantly opposed. Yet a truly scientific principle must either prove their identity, or make its choice among them, or discover something better. Plato seems to have taken up the three methods, one after the other, without coming to any very satisfactory conclusion. Aristotle identified the first two, but failed, or rather did not attempt to harmonise them with the third. Succeeding schools tried various combinations, laying more or less stress on different principles at different periods, till the will of an omnipotent Creator was substituted for every human standard. With the decline of dogmatic theology we have seen them all come to life again, and the old battle is still being fought out under our eyes. Speaking broadly, it may be said that the method which we have placed first on the list is more particularly represented in England, the second in France, and the last in Germany. Yet they refuse to be separated by any rigid line of demarcation, and each tends either to combine with or to pass into one or both of the rival theories. Modern utilitarianism, as constituted by John Stuart Mill, although avowedly based on the paramount value of pleasure, in admitting qualitative differences among enjoyments, and in subordinating individual to social good, introduces principles of action which are not, properly speaking, hedonistic. Neither is the idea of the whole by any means free from ambiguity. We have party, church, nation, order, progress, race, humanity, and the sum total of sensitive beings, all putting in their claims to figure as that entity. Where the pursuit of any single end gives rise to conflicting pretensions, a wise man will check them by reference to the other accredited standards, and will cherish a not unreasonable expectation that the evolution of life is tending to bring them all into ultimate agreement.

Returning to Socrates, we must further note that his identification of virtue with science, though it does not ex-

press the whole truth, expresses a considerable part of it, especially as to him conduct was a much more complex problem than it is to some modern teachers. Only those who believe in the existence of intuitive and infallible moral perceptions can consistently maintain that nothing is easier than to know our duty, and nothing harder than to do it. Even then, the intuitions must extend beyond general principles, and also inform us how and where to apply them. That no such inward illumination exists is sufficiently shown by experience; so much so that the mischief done by foolish people with good intentions has become proverbial. Modern casuists have, indeed, drawn a distinction between the intention and the act, making us responsible for the purity of the former, not for the consequences of the latter. Though based on the Socratic division between mind and body, this distinction would not have commended itself to Socrates. His object was not to save souls from sin, but to save individuals, families, and states from the ruin which ignorance of fact entails.

If we enlarge our point of view so as to cover the moral influence of knowledge on society taken collectively, its relative importance will be vastly increased. When Auguste Comte assigns the supreme direction of progress to advancing science, and when Buckle, following Fichte, makes the totality of human action depend on the totality of human knowledge, they are virtually attributing to intellectual education an even more decisive part than it played in the Socratic ethics. Even those who reject the theory, when pushed to such an extreme, will admit that the same quantity of self-devotion must produce a far greater effect when it is guided by deeper insight into the conditions of existence.

The same principle may be extended in a different direction if we substitute for knowledge, in its narrower significance, the more general conception of associated feeling. We shall then see that belief, habit, emotion, and instinct are only

different stages of the same process—the process by which experience is organised and made subservient to vital activity. The simplest reflex and the highest intellectual conviction are alike based on sensori-motor mechanism, and, so far, differ only through the relative complexity and instability of the nervous connexions involved. Knowledge is life in the making, and when it fails to control practice fails only by coming into conflict with passion—that is to say, with the consolidated results of an earlier experience. Physiology offers another analogy to the Socratic method which must not be overlooked. Socrates recommended the formation of definite conceptions because, among other advantages, they facilitated the diffusion of useful knowledge. So, also, the organised associations of feelings are not only serviceable to individuals, but may be transmitted to offspring with a regularity proportioned to their definiteness. How naturally these deductions follow from the doctrine under consideration, is evident from their having been, to a certain extent, already drawn by Plato. His plan for the systematic education of feeling under scientific supervision answers to the first ; his plan for breeding an improved race of citizens by placing marriage under State control answers to the second. Yet it is doubtful whether Plato's predecessor would have sanctioned any scheme tending to substitute an external compulsion, whether felt or not, for freedom and individual initiative, and a blind instinct for the self-consciousness which can give an account of its procedure at every step. He would bring us back from social physics and physiology to psychology, and from psychology to dialectic philosophy.

IV.

To Socrates himself the strongest reason for believing in the identity of conviction and practice was, perhaps, that he had made it a living reality. With him to know the right

and to do it were the same. In this sense we have already said that his life was the first verification of his philosophy. And just as the results of his ethical teaching can only be ideally separated from their application to his conduct, so also these results themselves cannot be kept apart from the method by which they were reached; nor is the process by which he reached them for himself distinguishable from the process by which he communicated them to his friends. In touching on this point, we touch on that which is greatest and most distinctively original in the Socratic system, or rather in the Socratic impulse to systematisation of every kind. What it was will be made clearer by reverting to the central conception of mind. With Protagoras mind meant an ever-changing stream of feeling; with Gorgias it was a principle of hopeless isolation, the interchange of thoughts between one consciousness and another, by means of signs, being an illusion. Socrates, on the contrary, attributed to it a steadfast control over passion, and a unifying function in society through its essentially synthetic activity, its need of co-operation and responsive assurance. He saw that the reason which overcomes animal desire tends to draw men together just as sensuality tends to drive them into hostile collision. If he recommended temperance on account of the increased egoistic pleasure which it secures, he recommended it also as making the individual a more efficient instrument for serving the community. If he inculcated obedience to the established laws, it was no doubt partly on grounds of enlightened self-interest, but also because union and harmony among citizens were thereby secured. And if he insisted on the necessity of forming definite conceptions, it was with the same twofold reference to personal and public advantage. Along with the diffusive, social character of mind he recognised its essential spontaneity. In a commonwealth where all citizens were free and equal, there must also be freedom and equality of reason. Having worked out a theory of life for himself, he

desired that all other men should, so far as possible, pass through the same bracing discipline. Here we have the secret of his famous erotetic method. He did not, like the Sophists, give continuous lectures, nor profess, like some of them, to answer every question that might be put to him. On the contrary, he put a series of questions to all who came in his way, generally in the form of an alternative, one side of which seemed self-evidently true and the other self-evidently false, arranged so as to lead the respondent, step by step, to the conclusion which it was desired that he should accept. Socrates did not invent this method. It had long been practised in the Athenian law-courts as a means for extracting from the opposite party admissions which could not be otherwise obtained, whence it had passed into the tragic drama, and into the discussion of philosophical problems. Nowhere else was the analytical power of Greek thought so brilliantly displayed; for before a contested proposition could be subjected to this mode of treatment, it had to be carefully discriminated from confusing adjuncts, considered under all the various meanings which it might possibly be made to bear, subdivided, if it was complex, into two or more distinct assertions, and linked by a minute chain of demonstration to the admission by which its validity was established or overthown.

Socrates, then, did not create the cross-examining elenchus, but he gave it two new and very important applications. So far as we can make out, it had hitherto been only used (again, after the example of the law-courts) for the purpose of detecting error or intentional deceit. He made it an instrument for introducing his own convictions into the minds of others, but so that his interlocutors seemed to be discovering them for themselves, and were certainly learning how, in their turn, to practise the same didactic interrogation on a future occasion. And he also used it for the purpose of logical self-discipline in a manner which will be

presently explained. Of course, Socrates also employed the erotetic method as a means of confutation, and, in his hands, it powerfully illustrated what we have called the negative moment of Greek thought. To prepare the ground for new truth it was necessary to clear away the misconceptions which were likely to interfere with its admission; or, if Socrates himself had nothing to impart, he could at any rate purge away the false conceit of knowledge from unformed minds, and hold them back from attempting difficult tasks until they were properly qualified for the undertaking. For example, a certain Glauco, a brother of Plato, had attempted to address the public assembly, when he was not yet twenty years of age, and was naturally quite unfitted for the task. At Athens, where every citizen had a voice in his country's affairs, obstruction, whether intentional or not, was very summarily dealt with. Speakers who had nothing to say that was worth hearing were forcibly removed from the bêma by the police; and this fate had already more than once befallen the youthful orator, much to the annoyance of his friends, who could not prevail on him to refrain from repeating the experiment, when Socrates took the matter in hand. One or two adroit compliments on his ambition drew Glauco into a conversation with the veteran dialectician on the aims and duties of a statesman. It was agreed that his first object should be to benefit the country, and that a good way of achieving this end would be to increase its wealth, which, again, could be done either by augmenting the receipts or by diminishing the expenditure. Could Glauco tell what was the present revenue of Athens, and whence it was derived?—No; he had not studied that question.—Well then, perhaps, he had some useful retrenchments to propose.—No; he had not studied that either. But the State might, he thought, be enriched at the expense of its enemies.—A good idea, if we can be sure of beating them first! Only, to avoid the risk of attacking somebody who is stronger than ourselves, we must

know what are the enemy's military resources as compared with our own. To begin with the latter: Can Glauco tell how many ships and soldiers Athens has at her disposal?—No, he does not at this moment remember.—Then, perhaps, he has it all written down somewhere?—He must confess not. So the conversation goes on until Socrates has convicted his ambitious young friend of possessing no accurate information whatever about political questions.[1]

Xenophon has recorded another dialogue in which a young man named Euthydêmus, who was also in training for a statesman, and who, as he supposed, had learned a great deal more out of books than Socrates could teach him, is brought to see how little he knows about ethical science. He is asked, Can a man be a good citizen without being just? No, he cannot.—Can Euthydêmus tell what acts are just? Yes, certainly, and also what are unjust.—Under which head does he put such actions as lying, deceiving, harming, enslaving?—Under the head of injustice.—But suppose a hostile people are treated in the various manners specified, is that unjust?—No, but it was understood that only one's friends were meant.—Well, if a general encourages his own army by false statements, or a father deceives his child into taking medicine, or your friend seems likely to commit suicide, and you purloin a deadly weapon from him, is that unjust?—No, we must add 'for the purpose of harming' to our definition. Socrates, however, does not stop here, but goes on cross-examining until the unhappy student is reduced to a state of hopeless bewilderment and shame. He is then brought to perceive the necessity of self-knowledge, which is explained to mean knowledge of one's own powers. As a further exercise Euthydêmus is put through his facings on the subject of good and evil. Health, wealth, strength, wisdom and beauty are mentioned as unquestionable goods. Socrates shows, in the style long afterwards imitated by Juvenal, that

[1] *Mem.*, III., vi.

they are only means towards an end, and may be productive of harm no less than good.—Happiness at any rate is an unquestionable good.—Yes, unless we make it consist of questionable goods like those just enumerated.[1]

It is in this last conversation that the historical Socrates most nearly resembles the Socrates of Plato's *Apologia.* Instead, however, of leaving Euthydêmus to the consciousness of his ignorance, as the latter would have done, he proceeds, in Xenophon's account, to direct the young man's studies according to the simplest and clearest principles ; and we have another conversation where religious truths are instilled by the same catechetical process.[2] Here the erotetic method is evidently a mere didactic artifice, and Socrates could easily have written out his lesson under the form of a regular demonstration. But there is little doubt that in other cases he used it as a means for giving increased precision to his own ideas, and also for testing their validity, that, in a word, the habit of oral communication gave him a familiarity with logical processes which could not otherwise have been acquired. The same cross-examination that acted as a spur on the mind of the respondent, reacted as a bridle on the mind of the interrogator, obliging him to make sure beforehand of every assertion that he put forward, to study the mutual bearings of his beliefs, to analyse them into their component elements, and to examine the relation in which they collectively stood to the opinions generally accepted. It has already been stated that Socrates gave the erotetic method two new applications; we now see in what direction they tended. He made it a vehicle for positive instruction, and he also made it an instrument for self-discipline, a help to fulfilling the Delphic precept, 'Know thyself.' The second application was even more important than the first. With us literary training—that is, the practice of continuous reading and composition—is so widely diffused, that conversation has become

[1] *Mem.*, IV., ii. [2] *Mem.*, IV., iii.

rather a hindrance than a help to the cultivation of argumentative ability. The reverse was true when Socrates lived. Long familiarity with debate was unfavourable to the art of writing; and the speeches in Thucydides show how difficult it was still found to present close reasoning under the form of an uninterrupted exposition. The traditions of conversational thrust and parry survived in rhetorical prose; and the crossed swords of tongue-fence were represented by the bristling *chevaux de frise* of a laboured antithetical arrangement where every clause received new strength and point from contrast with its opposing neighbour.

By combining the various considerations here suggested we shall arrive at a clearer understanding of the sceptical attitude commonly attributed to Socrates. There is, first of all, the negative and critical function exercised by him in common with many other constructive thinkers, and intimately associated with a fundamental law of Greek thought. Then there is the Attic courtesy and democratic spirit leading him to avoid any assumption of superiority over those whose opinions he is examining. And, lastly, there is the profound feeling that truth is a common possession, which no individual can appropriate as his peculiar privilege, because it can only be discovered, tested, and preserved by the united efforts of all.

V.

Thus, then, the Socratic dialogue has a double aspect. It is, like all philosophy, a perpetual carrying of life into ideas and of ideas into life. Life is raised to a higher level by thought; thought, when brought into contact with life, gains movement and growth, assimilative and reproductive power. If action is to be harmonised, we must regulate it by universal principles; if our principles are to be efficacious, they must be adopted; if they are to be adopted, we must demonstrate them to the satisfaction of our contemporaries. Language, consisting as

it does almost entirely of abstract terms, furnishes the materials out of which alone such an ideal union can be framed. But men do not always use the same words, least of all if they are abstract words, in the same sense, and therefore a preliminary agreement must be arrived at in this respect; a fact which Socrates was the first to recognise. Aristotle tells us that he introduced the custom of constructing general definitions into philosophy. The need of accurate verbal explanations is more felt in the discussion of ethical problems than anywhere else, if we take ethics in the only sense that Socrates would have accepted, as covering the whole field of mental activity. It is true that definitions are also employed in the mathematical and physical sciences, but there they are accompanied by illustrations borrowed from sensible experience, and would be unintelligible without them. Hence it has been possible for those branches of knowledge to make enormous progress, while the elementary notions on which they rest have not yet been satisfactorily analysed. The case is entirely altered when mental dispositions have to be taken into account. Here, abstract terms play much the same part as sensible intuitions elsewhere in steadying our conceptions, but without possessing the same invariable value; the experiences from which those conceptions are derived being exceedingly complex, and, what is more, exceedingly liable to disturbance from unforeseen circumstances. Thus, by neglecting a series of minute changes the same name may come to denote groups of phenomena not agreeing in the qualities which alone it originally connoted. More than one example of such a gradual metamorphosis has already presented itself in the course of our investigation, and others will occur in the sequel. Where distinctions of right and wrong are involved, it is of enormous practical importance that a definite meaning should be attached to words, and that they should not be allowed, at least without express agreement, to depart from the recognised acceptation: for such words, connoting as they do the approval or disap-

proval of mankind, exercise a powerful influence on conduct, so that their misapplication may lead to disastrous consequences. Where government by written law prevails the importance of defining ethical terms immediately becomes obvious, for, otherwise, personal rule would be restored under the disguise of judicial interpretation. Roman jurisprudence was the first attempt on a great scale to introduce a rigorous system of definitions into legislation. We have seen, in the preceding chapter, how it tended to put the conclusions of Greek naturalistic philosophy into practical shape. We now see how, on the formal side, its determinations are connected with the principles of Socrates. And we shall not undervalue this obligation if we bear in mind that the accurate wording of legal enactments is not less important than the essential justice of their contents. Similarly, the development of Catholic theology required that its fundamental conceptions should be progressively defined. This alone preserved the intellectual character of Catholicism in ages of ignorance and superstition, and helped to keep alive the reason by which superstition was eventually overthrown. Mommsen has called theology the bastard child of Religion and Science. It is something that, in the absence of the robuster parent, its features should be recalled and its tradition maintained even by an illegitimate offspring.

So far, we have spoken as if the Socratic definitions were merely verbal; they were, however, a great deal more, and their author did not accurately discriminate between what at that stage of thought could not well be kept apart—explanations of words, practical reforms, and scientific generalisations. For example, in defining a ruler to be one who knew more than other men, he was departing from the common usages of language, and showing not what was, but what ought to be true.[1] And in defining virtue as wisdom, he was putting forward a new theory of his own, instead of formulating the

[1] *Mem.*, III., ix., 10.

received connotation of a term. Still, after making every deduction, we cannot fail to perceive what an immense service was rendered to exact thought by introducing definitions of every kind into that department of enquiry where they were chiefly needed. We may observe also that a general law of Greek intelligence was here realising itself in a new direction. The need of accurate determination had always been felt, but hitherto it had worked under the more elementary forms of time, space, and causality, or, to employ the higher generalisation of modern psychology, under the form of contiguous association. The earlier cosmologies were all processes of circumscription ; they were attempts to fix the limits of the universe, and, accordingly, that element which was supposed to surround the others was also conceived as their producing cause, or else (in the theory of Heracleitus) as typifying the rationale of their continuous transformation. For this reason Parmenides, when he identified existence with extension, found himself obliged to declare that extension was necessarily limited. Of all the physical thinkers, Anaxagoras, who immediately precedes Socrates, approaches, on the objective side, most nearly to his standpoint. For the governing Nous brings order out of chaos by segregating the confused elements, by separating the unlike and drawing the like together, which is precisely what definition does for our conceptions. Meanwhile Greek literature had been performing the same task in a more restricted province, first fixing events according to their geographical and historical positions, then assigning to each its proper cause, then, as Thucydides does, isolating the most important groups of events from their external connexions, and analysing the causes of complex changes into different classes of antecedents. The final revolution effected by Socrates was to substitute arrangement by difference and resemblance for arrangement by contiguity in coexistence and succession. To say that by so doing he created science is inexact, for science requires to consider nature under every

aspect, including those which he systematically neglected; but we may say that he introduced the method which is most particularly applicable to mental phenomena, the method of ideal analysis, classification, and reasoning. For, be it observed that Socrates did not limit himself to searching for the One in the Many, he also, and perhaps more habitually, sought for the Many in the One. He would take hold of a conception and analyse it into its various notes, laying them, as it were, piecemeal before his interlocutor for separate acceptance or rejection. If, for example, they could not agree about the relative merits of two citizens, Socrates would decompose the character of a good citizen into its component parts and bring the comparison down to them. A good citizen, he would say, increases the national resources by his administration of the finances, defeats the enemy abroad, wins allies by his diplomacy, appeases dissension by his eloquence at home.[1] When the shy and gifted Charmides shrank from addressing a public audience on public questions, Socrates strove to overcome his nervousness by mercilessly subdividing the august Ecclêsia into its constituent classes. 'Is it the fullers that you are afraid of?' he asked, 'or the leather-cutters, or the masons, or the smiths, or the husbandmen, or the traders, or the lowest class of hucksters?'[2] Here the analytical power of Greek thought is manifested with still more searching effect than when it was applied to space and motion by Zeno.

Nor did Socrates only consider the whole conception in relation to its parts, he also grouped conceptions together according to their genera and founded logical classification. To appreciate the bearing of this idea on human interests it will be enough to study the disposition of a code. We shall

[1] *Mem.*, IV., vi., 14.

[2] Xenophon, *Mem.*, III., vii. We may incidentally notice that this passage is well worth the attention of those who look on the Athenian Dêmos as an idle and aristocractic body, supported by slave labour.

then see how much more easy it becomes to bring individual cases under a general rule, and to retain the whole body of rules in our memory, when we can pass step by step from the most universal to the most particular categories. Now, it was by jurists versed in the Stoic philosophy that Roman law was codified, and it was by Stoicism that the traditions of Socratic philosophy were most faithfully preserved.

Logical division is, however, a process not fully represented by any fixed and formal distribution of topics, nor yet is it equivalent to the arrangement of genera and species according to their natural affinities, as in the admirable systems of Jussieu and Cuvier. It is something much more flexible and subtle, a carrying down into the minutest detail, of that psychological law which requires, as a condition of perfect consciousness, that feelings, conceptions, judgments, and, generally speaking, all mental modes should be apprehended together with their contradictory opposites. Heracleitus had a dim perception of this truth when he taught the identity of antithetical couples, and it is more or less vividly illustrated by all Greek classic literature after him; but Socrates seems to have been the first who transformed it from a law of existence into a law of cognition; with him knowledge and ignorance, reason and passion, freedom and slavery, virtue, and vice, right and wrong (*πολλῶν ὀνομάτων μορφὴ μία*) were apprehended in inseparable connexion, and were employed for mutual elucidation, not only in broad masses, but also through their last subdivisions, like the delicate adjustments of light and shade on a Venetian canvas. This method of classification by graduated descent and symmetrical contrast, like the whole dialectic system of which it forms a branch, is only suited to the mental phenomena for which it was originally devised; and Hegel committed a fatal error when he applied it to explain the order of external coexistence and succession. We have already touched on the essentially subjective character of the Socratic definition, and

we shall presently have to make a similar restriction in dealing with Socratic induction. With regard to the question last considered, our limits will not permit us, nor, indeed, does it fall within the scope of our present study, to pursue a vein of reflection which was never fully worked out either by the Athenian philosophers or by their modern successors, at least not in its only legitimate direction.

After definition and division comes reasoning. We arrange objects in classes, that by knowing one or some we may know all. Aristotle attributes to Socrates the first systematic employment of induction as well as of general definitions.[1] Nevertheless, his method was not solely inductive, nor did it bear more than a distant resemblance to the induction of modern science. His principles were not gathered from the particular classes of phenomena which they determined, or were intended to determine, but from others of an analogous character which had already been reduced to order. Observing that all handicrafts were practised according to well-defined intelligible rules, leading, so far as they went, to satisfactory results, he required that life in its entirety should be similarly systematised. This was not so much reasoning as a demand for the more extended application of reasoning. It was a truly philosophic postulate, for philosophy is not science, but precedes and underlies it. Belief and action tend to divide themselves into two provinces, of which the one is more or less organised, the other more or less chaotic. We philosophise when we try to bring the one into order, and also when we test the foundations on which the order of the other reposes, fighting both against incoherent mysticism and against traditional routine. Such is the purpose that the most distinguished thinkers of modern times—Francis Bacon, Spinoza, Hume, Kant, Auguste Comte, and Herbert Spencer—however widely they may otherwise differ, have, according to their respective lights, all set themselves to achieve. No doubt, there is

[1] *Metaph.*, XIII., iv.

this vast difference between Socrates and his most recent successors, that physical science is the great type of certainty to the level of which they would raise all speculation, while with him it was the type of a delusion and an impossibility. The analogy of artistic production when applied to Nature led him off on a completely false track, the ascription to conscious design of that which is, in truth, a result of mechanical causation.[1] But now that the relations between the known and the unknown have been completely transformed, there is no excuse for repeating the fallacies which imposed on his vigorous understanding; and the genuine spirit of Socrates is best represented by those who, starting like him from the data of experience, are led to adopt a diametrically opposite conclusion. We may add, that the Socratic method of analogical reasoning gave a retrospective justification to early Greek thought, of which Socrates was not himself aware. Its daring generalisations were really an inference from the known to the unknown. To interpret all physical processes in terms of matter and motion, is only assuming that the changes to which our senses cannot penetrate are homogeneous with the changes which we can feel and see. When Socrates argued that, because the human body is animated by a consciousness, the material universe must be similarly animated, Democritus might have answered that the world presents no appearance of being organised like an animal. When he argued that, because statues and pictures are known to be the work of intelligence, the living models from which they are copied must be similarly due to design, Aristodêmus should have answered, that the former are seen to be manufactured, while the others are seen to grow. It might also have been observed, that if our own intelligence requires to be accounted for by a cause like itself, so also does the creative cause, and so on through an infinite regress of antecedents. Teleology has been destroyed by the Darwinian theory; but before the *Origin of*

[1] *Mem.*, I., iv.

Species appeared, the slightest scrutiny might have shown that it was a precarious foundation for religious belief. If many thoughtful men are now turning away from theism, 'natural theology' may be thanked for the desertion. 'I believe in God,' says the German baron in *Thorndale*, 'until your philosophers demonstrate His existence.' 'And then?' asks a friend. 'And then—I do not believe the demonstration.'

Whatever may have been the errors into which Socrates fell, he did not commit the fatal mistake of compromising his ethical doctrine by associating it indissolubly with his metaphysical opinions. Religion, with him, instead of being the source and sanction of all duty, simply brought in an additional duty—that of gratitude to the gods for their goodness. We shall presently see where he sought for the ultimate foundation of morality, after completing our survey of the dialectic method with which it was so closely connected. The induction of Socrates, when it went beyond that kind of analogical reasoning which we have just been considering, was mainly abstraction, the process by which he obtained those general conceptions or definitions which played so great a part in his philosophy. Thus, on comparing the different virtues, as commonly distinguished, he found that they all agreed in requiring knowledge, which he accordingly concluded to be the essence of virtue. So other moralists have been led to conclude that right actions resemble one another in their felicific quality, and in that alone. Similarly, political economists find, or formerly found (for we do not wish to be positive on the matter), that a common characteristic of all industrial employments is the desire to secure the maximum of profit with the minimum of trouble. Another comparison shows that value depends on the relation between supply and demand. Aesthetic enjoyments of every kind resemble one another by including an element of ideal emotion. It is a common characteristic of all cognitions that they are

constructed by association out of elementary feelings. All societies are marked by a more or less developed division of labour. These are given as typical generalisations which have been reached by the Socratic method. They are all taken from the philosophic sciences—that is, the sciences dealing with phenomena which are partly determined by mind, and the systematic treatment of which is so similar that they are frequently studied in combination by a single thinker, and invariably so by the greatest thinkers of any. But were we to examine the history of the physical sciences, we should find that this method of wide comparison and rapid abstraction cannot, as Francis Bacon imagined, be successfully applied to them. The facts with which they deal are not transparent, not directly penetrable by thought; hence they must be treated deductively. Instead of a front attack, we must, so to speak, take them in the rear. Bacon never made a more unfortunate observation than when he said that the syllogism falls far short of the subtlety of Nature. Nature is even simpler than the syllogism, for she accomplishes her results by advancing from equation to equation. That which really does fall far short of her subtlety is precisely the Baconian induction with its superficial comparison of instances. No amount of observation could detect any resemblance between the bursting of a thunderstorm and the attraction of a loadstone, or between the burning of charcoal and the rusting a nail.

But while philosophers cannot prescribe a method to physical science, they may, to a certain extent, bring it under their cognisance, by disengaging its fundamental conceptions and assumptions, and showing that they are functions of mind; by arranging the special sciences in systematic order for purposes of study; and by investigating the law of their historical evolution. Furthermore, since psychology is the central science of philosophy, and since it is closely connected with physiology, which in turn reposes on the inorganic

sciences, a certain knowledge of the objective world is indispensable to any knowledge of ourselves. Lastly, since the subjective sphere not only rests, once for all, on the objective, but is also in a continual state of action and reaction with it, no philosophy can be complete which does not take into account the constitution of things as they exist independently of ourselves, in order to ascertain how far they are unalterable, and how far they may be modified to our advantage. We see, then, that Socrates, in restricting philosophy to human interests, was guided by a just tact; that in creating the method of dialectic abstraction, he created an instrument adequate to this investigation, but to this alone; and, finally, that human interests, understood in the largest sense, embrace a number of subsidiary studies which either did not exist when he taught, or which the inevitable superstitions of his age would not allow him to pursue.

It remains to glance at another aspect of the dialectic method first developed on a great scale by Plato, and first fully defined by Aristotle, but already playing a certain part in the Socratic teaching. This is the testing of common assumptions by pushing them to their logical conclusion, and rejecting those which lead to consequences inconsistent with themselves. So understood, dialectic means the complete elimination of inconsistency, and has ever since remained the most powerful weapon of philosophical criticism. To take an instance near at hand, it is constantly employed by thinkers so radically different as Mr. Herbert Spencer and Professor T. H. Green; while it has been generalised into an objective law of Nature and history, with dazzling though only momentary success, by Hegel and his school.

VI.

Consistency is, indeed, the one word which, better than any other, expresses the whole character of Socrates, and the whole of philosophy as well. Here the supreme conception

of mind reappears under its most rigorous, but, at the same time, its most beneficent aspect. It is the temperance which no allurement can surprise ; the fortitude which no terror can break through ; the justice which eliminates all personal considerations, egoistic and altruistic alike ; the truthfulness which, with exactest harmony, fits words to meanings, meanings to thoughts, and thoughts to things ; the logic which will tolerate no self-contradiction ; the conviction which seeks for no acceptance unwon by reason ; the liberalism which works through free agencies for freedom ; the love which wills another's good for that other's sake alone.[1] It was the intellectual passion for consistency which made Socrates so great and which fused his life into a flawless whole ; but it was an unconscious motive power, and therefore he attributed to mere knowledge what knowledge alone could not supply. A clear perception of right cannot by itself secure the obedience of our will. High principles are not of any value, except to those in whom a discrepancy between practice and profession produces the sharpest anguish of which their nature is capable ; a feeling like, though immeasurably stronger than, that which women of exquisite sensibility experience when they see a candle set crooked or a table-cover awry. How moral laws have come to be established, and why they prescribe or prohibit certain classes of actions, are questions which still divide the schools, though with an increasing consensus of authority on the utilitarian side : their ultimate sanction—that which, whatever they are, makes obedience to them truly moral—can hardly be sought elsewhere than in the same consciousness of logical stringency that determines, or should determine, our abstract beliefs.

Be this as it may, we venture to hope that a principle has

[1] 'Il sait que, dans l'intérêt même du bien, il ne faut pas imposer le bien d'une manière trop absolue, le jeu libre de la liberté étant la condition de la vie humaine. . . . . poursuite en toutes choses du bien public, non des applaudissements.'—Renan, *Marc-Aurèle*, pp. 18, 19.

been here suggested deep and strong enough to reunite the two halves into which historians have hitherto divided the Socratic system, or, rather, the beginning of that universal systematisation called philosophy, which is not yet, and perhaps never will be, completed; a principle which is outwardly revealed in the character of the philosopher himself. With such an one, ethics and dialectics become almost indistinguishable through the intermixture of their processes and the parallelism of their aims. Integrity of conviction enters, both as a means and as an element, into perfect integrity of conduct, nor can it be maintained where any other element of rectitude is wanting. Clearness, consecutiveness, and coherence are the morality of belief; while temperance, justice, and beneficence, taken in their widest sense and taken together, constitute the supreme logic of life.

It has already been observed that the thoughts of Socrates were thrown into shape for and by communication, that they only became definite when brought into vivifying contact with another intelligence. Such was especially the case with his method of ethical dialectic. Instead of tendering his advice in the form of a lecture, as other moralists have at all times been so fond of doing, he sought out some pre-existing sentiment or opinion inconsistent with the conduct of which he disapproved, and then gradually worked round from point to point, until theory and practice were exhibited in immediate contrast. Here, his reasoning, which is sometimes spoken of as exclusively inductive, was strictly syllogistic, being the application of a general law to a particular instance. With the growing emancipation of reason, we may observe a return to the Socratic method of moralisation. Instead of rewards and punishments, which encourage selfish calculation, or examples, which stimulate a mischievous jealousy when they do not create a spirit of servile imitation, the judicious trainer will find his motive power in the pupil's incipient tendency to form moral judgments, which, when reflected on the

individual's own actions, become what we call a conscience. It has been mentioned in the preceding chapter that the celebrated golden rule of justice was already enunciated by Greek moralists in the fourth century B.C. Possibly it may have been first formulated by Socrates. In all cases it occurs in the writings of his disciples, and happily expresses the drift of his entire philosophy. This generalising tendency was, indeed, so natural to a noble Greek, that instances of it occur long before philosophy began. We find it in the famous question of Achilles: 'Did not this whole war begin on account of a woman? Are the Atreidae the only men who love their wives?'[1] and in the now not less famous apostrophe to Lycaon, reminding him that an early death is the lot of far worthier men than he[2]—utterances which come on us with the awful effect of lightning flashes, that illuminate the whole horizon of existence while they paralyse or destroy an individual victim.

The power which Socrates possessed of rousing other minds to independent activity and apostolic transmission of spiritual gifts was, as we have said, the second verification of his doctrine. Even those who, like Antisthenes and Aristippus, derived their positive theories from the Sophists rather than from him, preferred to be regarded as his followers; and Plato, from whom his ideas received their most splendid development, has acknowledged the debt by making that venerated figure the centre of his own immortal Dialogues. A third verification is given by the subjective, practical, dialectic tendency of all subsequent philosophy properly so called. On this point we will content ourselves with mentioning one instance out of many, the recent declaration of Mr. Herbert Spencer that his whole system was constructed for the sake of its ethical conclusion.[3]

Apart, however, from abstract speculation, the ideal

[1] *Il.*, IX., 337. [2] *Ib.*, XXI., 106.

[3] In the preface to the *Data of Ethics*.

method seems to have exercised an immediate and powerful influence on Art, an influence which was anticipated by Socrates himself. In two conversations reported by Xenophon,[1] he impresses on Parrhasius, the painter, and Cleito, the sculptor, the importance of so animating the faces and figures which they represented as to make them express human feelings, energies, and dispositions, particularly those of the most interesting and elevated type. And such, in fact, was the direction followed by imitative art after Pheidias, though not without degenerating into a sensationalism which Socrates would have severely condemned. Another and still more remarkable proof of the influence exercised on plastic representation by ideal philosophy was, perhaps, not foreseen by its founder. We allude to the substitution of abstract and generic for historical subjects by Greek sculpture in its later stages, and not by sculpture only, but by dramatic poetry as well. For early art, whether it addressed itself to the eye or to the imagination, and whether its subjects were taken from history or from fiction, had always been historical in this sense, that it exhibited the performance of particular actions by particular persons in a given place and at a given time; the mode of presentment most natural to those whose ideas are mainly determined by contiguous association. The schools which came after Socrates let fall the limitations of concrete reality, and found the unifying principle of their works in association by resemblance, making their figures the personification of a single attribute or group of attributes, and bringing together forms distinguished by the community of their characteristics or the convergence of their functions. Thus Aphroditê no longer figured as the lover of Arês or Anchisês, but as the personification of female beauty; while her statues were grouped together with images of the still more transparent abstractions, Love, Longing, and Desire. Similarly Apollo became a personification of musical enthusiasm, and Dionysus

[1] *Mem.*, III., x.

of Bacchic inspiration. So also dramatic art, once completely historical, even with Aristophanes, now chose for its subjects such constantly-recurring types as the ardent lover, the stern father, the artful slave, the boastful soldier, and the fawning parasite.[1]

Nor was this all. Thought, after having, as it would seem, wandered away from reality in search of empty abstractions, by the help of those very abstractions regained possession of concrete existence, and acquired a far fuller intelligence of its complex manifestations. For, each individual character is an assemblage of qualities, and can only be understood when those qualities, after having been separately studied, are finally recombined. Thus, biography is a very late production of literature, and although biographies are the favourite reading of those who most despise philosophy, they could never have been written without its help. Moreover, before characters can be described they must exist. Now, it is partly philosophy which calls character into existence by sedulous inculcation of self-knowledge and self-culture, by consolidating a man's individuality into something independent of circumstances, so that it comes to form, not a figure in bas-relief, but what sculptors call a figure in the round. Such was Socrates himself, and such were the figures which he taught Xenophon and Plato to recognise and portray. Character-drawing begins with them, and the *Memorabilia* in particular is the earliest attempt at a biographical analysis that we possess. From this to Plutarch's *Lives* there was still a long journey to be accomplished, but the interval between them is less considerable than that which divides Xenophon from his immediate predecessor, Thucydides. And when we remember how intimately the substance of Christian teaching is connected with the literary form of its first record, we shall still better appreciate the all-penetrating influence of Hellenic thought,

[1] Curtius, *Griechische Geschichte*, III., 526–30 (3rd ed.), where, however, the revolution in art is attributed to the influence of the Sophists.

vying, as it does, with the forces of nature in subtlety and universal diffusion.

Besides transforming art and literature, the dialectic method helped to revolutionise social life, and the impulse communicated in this direction is still very far from being exhausted. We allude to its influence on female education. The intellectual blossoming of Athens was aided, in its first development, by a complete separation of the sexes. There were very few of his friends to whom an Athenian gentleman talked so little as to his wife.[1] Colonel Mure aptly compares her position to that of an English housekeeper, with considerably less liberty than is enjoyed by the latter. Yet the union of tender admiration with the need for intelligent sympathy and the desire to awaken interest in noble pursuits existed at Athens in full force, and created a field for its exercise. Wilhelm von Humboldt has observed that at this time chivalrous love was kept alive by customs which, to us, are intensely repellent. That so valuable a sentiment should be preserved and diverted into a more legitimate channel was an object of the highest importance. The naturalistic method of ethics did much, but it could not do all, for more was required than a return to primitive simplicity. Here the method of mind stepped in and supplied the deficiency. Reciprocity was the soul of dialectic as practised by Socrates, and the dialectic of love demands a reciprocity of passion which can only exist between the sexes. But in a society where the free intercourse of modern Europe was not permitted, the modern sentiment could not be reached at a single bound ; and those who sought for the conversation of intelligent women had to seek for it among a class of which Aspasia was the highest representative. Such women played a great part in later Athenian society ; they attended philosophical lectures, furnished heroines to the New Comedy, and on the whole gave a healthier tone to literature. Their successors, the Delias and Cynthias of

[1] Xenoph., *Oeconom.*, iii., 12.

Roman elegiac poetry, called forth strains of exalted affection which need nothing but a worthier object to place them on a level with the noblest expressions of tenderness that have since been heard. Here at least, to understand is to forgive; and we shall be less scandalised than certain critics,[1] we shall even refuse to admit that Socrates fell below the dignity of a moralist, when we hear that he once visited a celebrated beauty of this class, Theodotê by name;[2] that he engaged her in a playful conversation; and that he taught her to put more mind into her profession; to attract by something deeper than personal charms; to show at least an appearance of interest in the welfare of her lovers; and to stimulate their ardour by a studied reserve, granting no favour that had not been repeatedly and passionately sought after.

Xenophon gives the same interest a more edifying direction when he enlivens the dry details of his *Cyropaedia* with touching episodes of conjugal affection, or presents lessons in domestic economy under the form of conversations between a newly-married couple.[3] Plato in some respects transcends, in others falls short of his less gifted contemporary. For his doctrine of love as an educating process—a true doctrine, all sneers and perversions notwithstanding—though readily applicable to the relation of the sexes, is not applied to it by him; and his project of a common training for men and women, though suggestive of a great advance on the existing system if rightly carried out, was, from his point of view, a retrograde step towards savage or even animal life, an attempt to throw half the burdens incident to a military organisation of society on those who had become absolutely incapable of bearing them.

Fortunately, the dialectic method proved stronger than its own creators, and, once set going, introduced feelings and ex-

[1] Mure, *History of Grecian Literature*, IV., 451.
[2] *Mem.*, III., xi.
[3] *Oeconom.*, vii., 4 ff.

periences of which they had never dreamed, within the horizon of philosophic consciousness. It was found that if women had much to learn, much also might be learned from them. Their wishes could not be taken into account without giving a greatly increased prominence in the guidance of conduct to such sentiments as fidelity, purity, and pity; and to that extent the religion which they helped to establish has, at least in principle, left no room for any further progress. On the other hand, it is only by reason that the more exclusively feminine impulses can be freed from their primitive narrowness and elevated into truly human emotions. Love, when left to itself, causes more pain than pleasure, for the words of the old idyl still remain true which associate it with jealousy as cruel as the grave; pity, without prevision, creates more suffering than it relieves; and blind fidelity is instinctively opposed even to the most beneficent changes. We are still suffering from the excessive preponderance which Catholicism gave to the ideas of women; but we need not listen to those who tell us that the varied experiences of humanity cannot be organised into a rational, consistent, self-supporting whole.

A survey of the Socratic philosophy would be incomplete without some comment on an element in the life of Socrates, which at first sight seems to lie altogether outside philosophy. There is no fact in his history more certain than that he believed himself to be constantly accompanied by a Daemonium, a divine voice often restraining him, even in trifling matters, but never prompting to positive action. That it was neither conscience in our sense of the word, nor a supposed familiar spirit, is now generally admitted. Even those who believe in the supernatural origin and authority of our moral feelings do not credit them with a power of divining the accidentally good or evil consequences which may attend on our most trivial and indifferent actions; while, on the other hand, those feelings have a positive no less than a negative

function, which is exhibited whenever the performance of good deeds becomes a duty. That the Daemonium was not a personal attendant is proved by the invariable use of an indefinite neuter adjective to designate it. How the phenomenon itself should be explained is a question for professional pathologists. We have here to account for the interpretation put upon it by Socrates, and this, in our judgment, follows quite naturally from his characteristic mode of thought. That the gods should signify their pleasure by visible signs and public oracles was an experience familiar to every Greek. Socrates, conceiving God as a mind diffused through the whole universe, would look for traces of the Divine presence in his own mind, and would readily interpret any inward suggestion, not otherwise to be accounted for, as a manifestation of this all-pervading power. Why it should invariably appear under the form of a restraint is less obvious. The only explanation seems to be that, as a matter of fact, such mysterious feelings, whether the product of unconscious experience or not, do habitually operate as deterrents rather than as incentives.

VII.

This Daemonium, whatever it may have been, formed one of the ostensible grounds on which its possessor was prosecuted and condemned to death for impiety. We might have spared ourselves the trouble of going over the circumstances connected with that tragical event, had not various attempts been made in some well-known works to extenuate the significance of a singularly atrocious crime. The case stands thus. In the year 399 B.C. Socrates, who was then over seventy, and had never in his life been brought before a law-court, was indicted on the threefold charge of introducing new divinities, of denying those already recognised by the State, and of corrupting young men. His principal accuser was one Melêtus, a poet, supported by Lycon, a rhetorician,

and by a much more powerful backer, Anytus, a leading citizen in the restored democracy. The charge was tried before a large popular tribunal, numbering some five hundred members. Socrates regarded the whole affair with profound indifference. When urged to prepare a defence, he replied, with justice, that he had been preparing it his whole life long. He could not, indeed, have easily foreseen what line the prosecutors would take. Our own information on this point is meagre enough, being principally derived from allusions made by Xenophon, who was not himself present at the trial. There seems, however, no unfairness in concluding that the charge of irreligion neither was nor could be substantiated. The evidence of Xenophon is quite sufficient to establish the unimpeachable orthodoxy of his friend. If it really was an offence at Athens to believe in gods unrecognised by the State, Socrates was not guilty of that offence, for his Daemonium was not a new divinity, but a revelation from the established divinities, such as individual believers have at all times been permitted to receive even by the most jealous religious communities. The imputation of infidelity, commonly and indiscriminately brought against all philosophers, was a particularly unhappy one to fling at the great opponent of physical science, who, besides, was noted for the punctual discharge of his religious duties. That the first two counts of the indictment should be so frivolous raises a strong prejudice against the third. The charges of corruption seem to have come under two heads—alleged encouragement of disrespect to parents, and of disaffection towards democratic institutions. In support of the former some innocent expressions let fall by Socrates seem to have been taken up and cruelly perverted. By way of stimulating his young friends to improve their minds, he had observed that relations were only of value when they could help one another, and that to do so they must be properly educated. This was twisted into an assertion that ignorant parents might properly be placed

under restraint by their better-informed children. That such an inference could not have been sanctioned by Socrates himself is obvious from his insisting on the respect due even to so intolerable a mother as Xanthippê.[1] The political opinions of the defendant presented a more vulnerable point for attack. He thought the custom of choosing magistrates by lot absurd, and did not conceal his contempt for it. There is, however, no reason for believing that such purely theoretical criticisms were forbidden by law or usage at Athens. At any rate, much more revolutionary sentiments were tolerated on the stage. That Socrates would be no party to a violent subversion of the Constitution, and would regard it with high disapproval, was abundantly clear both from his life and from the whole tenor of his teaching. In opposition to Hippias, he defined justice as obedience to the law of the land. The chances of the lot had, on one memorable occasion, called him to preside over the deliberations of the Sovereign Assembly. A proposition was made, contrary to law, that the generals who were accused of having abandoned the crews of their sunken ships at Arginusae should be tried in a single batch. In spite of tremendous popular clamour, Socrates refused to put the question to the vote on the single day for which his office lasted. The just and resolute man, who would not yield to the unrighteous demands of a crowd, had shortly afterwards to face the threats of a frowning tyrant. When the Thirty were installed in power, he publicly, and at the risk of his life, expressed disapproval of their sanguinary proceedings. The oligarchy, wishing to involve as many respectable citizens as possible in complicity with their crimes, sent for five persons, of whom Socrates was one, and ordered them to bring a certain Leo from Salamis, that he might be put to death; the others obeyed, but Socrates refused to accompany them on their disgraceful errand. Nevertheless, it told heavily against the philosopher that

[1] *Mem.*, II., i.

Alcibiades, the most mischievous of demagogues, and Critias, the most savage of aristocrats, passed for having been educated by him. It was remembered, also, that he was in the habit of quoting a passage from Homer, where Odysseus is described as appealing to the reason of the chiefs, while he brings inferior men to their senses with rough words and rougher chastisement. In reality, Socrates did not mean that the poor should be treated with brutality by the rich, for he would have been the first to suffer had such license been permitted, but he meant that where reason failed harsher methods of coercion must be applied. Precisely because expressions of opinion let fall in private conversation are so liable to be misunderstood or purposely perverted, to adduce them in support of a capital charge where no overt act can be alleged, is the most mischievous form of encroachment on individual liberty.

Modern critics, beginning with Hegel,[1] have discovered reasons for considering Socrates a dangerous character, which apparently did not occur to Melêtus and his associates. We are told that the whole system of applying dialectics to morality had an unsettling tendency, for if men were once taught that the sacredness of duty rested on their individual conviction they might refuse to be convinced, and act accordingly. And it is further alleged that Socrates first introduced this principle of subjectivity into morals. The persecuting spirit is so insatiable that in default of acts it attacks opinions, and in default of specific opinions it fastens on general tendencies. We know that Joseph de Maistre was suspected by his ignorant neighbours of being a Revolutionist because most of his time was spent in study; and but the other day a French preacher was sent into exile by his ecclesiastical superiors for daring to support Catholic morality on rational grounds.[2] Fortunately Greek society was not

[1] *Gesch. d. Ph.*, II., 100 ff.

[2] Written in the spring of 1880. The allusion is to Father Didon, who was at that time rusticated in Corsica.

subject to the rules of the Dominican Order. Never anywhere in Greece, certainly not at Athens, did there exist that solid, all-comprehensive, unquestionable fabric of traditional obligation assumed by Hegel; and Zeller is conceding far too much when he defends Socrates, on the sole ground that the recognised standards of right had fallen into universal contempt during the Peloponnesian war, while admitting that he might fairly have been silenced at an earlier period, if indeed his teaching could have been conceived as possible before it actually began.[1] For from the first, both in literature and in life, Greek thought is distinguished by an ardent desire to get to the bottom of every question, and to discover arguments of universal applicability for every decision. Even in the youth of Pericles knotty ethical problems were eagerly discussed without any interference on the part of the public authorities. Experience had to prove how far-reaching was the effect of ideas before a systematic attempt could be made to control them.

In what terms Socrates replied to his accusers cannot be stated with absolute certainty. Reasons have been already given for believing that the speech put into his mouth by Plato is not entirely historical; and here we may mention as a further reason that the specific charges mentioned by Xenophon are not even alluded to in it. Thus much, however, is clear, that the defence was of a thoroughly dignified character; and that, while the allegations of the prosecution were successfully rebutted, the defendant stood entirely on his innocence, and refused to make any of the customary but illegal appeals to the compassion of the court. We are assured that he was condemned solely on account of this defiant attitude, and by a very small majority. Melêtus had demanded the penalty of death, but by Attic law Socrates had the right of proposing some milder sentence as an alternative. According to Plato, he began by stating that

[1] *Ph. d. Gr.*, II., a, 192.

the justest return for his entire devotion to the public good would be maintenance at the public expense during the remainder of his life, an honour usually granted to victors at the Olympic games. In default of this he proposed a fine of thirty minae, to be raised by contributions among his friends. According to another account,[1] he refused, on the ground of his innocence, to name any alternative penalty. On a second division Socrates was condemned to death by a much larger majority than that which had found him guilty, eighty of those who had voted for his acquittal now voting for his execution.

Such was the transaction which some moderns, Grote among the number, holding Socrates to be one of the best and wisest of men, have endeavoured to excuse. Their argument is that the illustrious victim was jointly responsible for his own fate, and that he was really condemned, not for his teaching, but for contempt of court. To us it seems that this is a distinction without a difference. What has been so finely said of space and time may be said also of the Socratic life and the Socratic doctrine; each was contained entire in every point of the other. Such as he appeared to the Dicastery, such also he appeared everywhere, always, and to all men, offering them the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If conduct like his was not permissible in a court of law, then it was not permissible at all; if justice could not be administered without reticences, evasions, and disguises, where was sincerity ever to be practised? If reason was not to be the paramount arbitress in questions of public interest, what issues could ever be entrusted to her decision? Admit every extenuating circumstance that the utmost ingenuity can devise, and from every point of view one fact will come out clearly, that Socrates was impeached as a philosopher, that he defended himself like a philosopher, and that he was condemned to

[1] In the *Apologia* attributed to Xenophon.

death because he was a philosopher. Those who attempt to remove this stain from the character of the Athenian people will find that, like the blood-stain on Bluebeard's key, when it is rubbed out on one side it reappears on the other. To punish Socrates for his teaching, or for the way in which he defended his teaching, was equally persecution, and persecution of the worst description, that which attacks not the results of free thought but free thought itself. We cannot then agree with Grote when he says that the condemnation of Socrates 'ought to count as one of the least gloomy items in an essentially gloomy catalogue.' On the contrary, it is the gloomiest of any, because it reveals a depth of hatred for pure reason in vulgar minds which might otherwise have remained unsuspected. There is some excuse for other persecutors, for Caiaphas, and St. Dominic, and Calvin: for the Inquisition, and for the authors of the dragonnades; for the judges of Giordano Bruno, and the judges of Vanini: they were striving to exterminate particular opinions, which they believed to be both false and pernicious; there is no such excuse for the Athenian dicasts, least of all for those eighty who, having pronounced Socrates innocent, sentenced him to death because he reasserted his innocence; if, indeed, innocence be not too weak a word to describe his life-long battle against that very irreligion and corruption which were laid to his charge. Here, in this one cause, the great central issue between two abstract principles, the principle of authority and the principle of reason, was cleared from all adventitious circumstances, and disputed on its own intrinsic merits with the usual weapons of argument on the one side and brute force on the other. On that issue Socrates was finally condemned, and on it his judges must be condemned by us.

Neither can we admit Grote's further contention, that in no Greek city but Athens would Socrates have been permitted to carry on his cross-examining activity for so long a

period. On the contrary, we agree with Colonel Mure,[1] that in no other state would he have been molested. Xenophanes and Parmenides, Heracleitus and Democritus, had given utterance to far bolder opinions than his, opinions radically destructive of Greek religion, apparently without running the slightest personal risk; while Athens had more than once before shown the same spirit of fanatical intolerance, though without proceeding to such a fatal extreme, thanks, probably, to the timely escape of her intended victims. M. Ernest Renan has quite recently contrasted the freedom of thought accorded by Roman despotism with the narrowness of old Greek Republicanism, quoting what he calls the Athenian Inquisition as a sample of the latter. The word inquisition is not too strong, only the lecturer should not have led his audience to believe that Greek Republicanism was in this respect fairly represented by its most brilliant type, for had such been the case very little free thought would have been left for Rome to tolerate.

During the month's respite accidentally allowed him, Socrates had one more opportunity of displaying that stedfast obedience to the law which had been one of his great guiding principles through life. The means of escaping from prison were offered to him, but he refused to avail himself of them, according to Plato, that the implicit contract of loyalty to which his citizenship had bound him might be preserved unbroken. Nor was death unwelcome to him although it is not true that he courted it, any desire to figure as a martyr being quite alien from the noble simplicity of his character. But he had reached an age when the daily growth in wisdom which for him alone made life worth living, seemed likely to be exchanged for a gradual and melancholy decline. That this past progress was a good in itself he never doubted, whether it was to be continued in other worlds, or succeeded by the happiness of an eternal sleep. And we may be sure that he

[1] *Hist. of Gr. Lit.*, IV., App. A.

would have held his own highest good to be equally desirable for the whole human race, even with the clear prevision that its collective aspirations and efforts cannot be prolonged for ever.

Two philosophers only can be named who, in modern times, have rivalled or approached the moral dignity of Socrates. Like him, Spinoza realised his own ideal of a good and happy life. Like him, Giordano Bruno, without a hope of future recompense, chose death rather than a life unfaithful to the highest truth, and death, too, under its most terrible form, not the painless extinction by hemlock inflicted in a heathen city, but the agonising dissolution intended by Catholic love to serve as a foretaste of everlasting fire. Yet with neither can the parallel be extended further; for Spinoza, wisely perhaps, refused to face the storms which a public profession and propagation of his doctrine would have raised; and the wayward career of Giordano Bruno was not in keeping with its heroic end. The complex and distracting conditions in which their lot was cast did not permit them to attain that statuesque completeness which marked the classic age of Greek life and thought. Those times developed a wilder energy, a more stubborn endurance, a sweeter purity than any that the ancient world had known. But until the scattered elements are recombined in a still loftier harmony, our sleepless thirst for perfection can be satisfied at one spring alone. Pericles must remain the ideal of statesmanship, Pheidias of artistic production, and Socrates of philosophic power.

Before the ideas which we have passed in review could go forth on their world-conquering mission, it was necessary, not only that Socrates should die, but that his philosophy should die also, by being absorbed into the more splendid generalisations of Plato's system. That system has, for some time past, been made an object of close study in our most famous seats of learning, and a certain acquaintance with it has almost become part of a liberal education in England. No

better source of inspiration, combined with discipline, could be found ; but we shall understand and appreciate Plato still better by first extricating the nucleus round which his speculations have gathered in successive deposits, and this we can only do with the help of Xenophon, whose little work also well deserves attention for the sake of its own chaste and candid beauty. The relation in which it stands to the Platonic writings may be symbolised by an example familiar to the experience of every traveller. As sometimes, in visiting a Gothic cathedral, we are led through the wonders of the more modern edifice—under soaring arches, over tesselated pavements, and between long rows of clustered columns, past frescoed walls, storied windows, carven pulpits, and sepulchral monuments, with their endless wealth of mythologic imagery —down into the oldest portion of any, the bare stern crypt, severe with the simplicity of early art, resting on pillars taken from an ancient temple, and enclosing the tomb of some martyred saint, to whose glorified spirit an office of perpetual intercession before the mercy-seat is assigned, and in whose honour all that external magnificence has been piled up ; so also we pass through the manifold and marvellous constructions of Plato's imagination to that austere memorial where Xenophon has enshrined with pious care, under the great primary divisions of old Hellenic virtue, an authentic reliquary of one standing foremost among those who, having worked out their own deliverance from the powers of error and evil, would not be saved alone, but published the secret of redemption though death were the penalty of its disclosure ; and who, by their transmitted influence, even more than by their eternal example, are still contributing to the progressive development of all that is most rational, most consistent, most social, and therefore most truly human in ourselves.

CHAPTER IV.

PLATO: HIS TEACHERS AND HIS TIMES.

I.

In studying the growth of philosophy as an historical evolution, repetitions and anticipations must necessarily be of frequent occurrence. Ideas meet us at every step which can only be appreciated when we trace out their later developments, or only understood when we refer them back to earlier and half-forgotten modes of thought. The speculative tissue is woven out of filaments so delicate and so complicated that it is almost impossible to say where one begins and the other ends. Even conceptions which seem to have been transmitted without alteration are constantly acquiring a new value according to the connexions into which they enter or the circumstances to which they are applied. But if the method of evolution, with its two great principles of continuity and relativity, substitutes a maze of intricate lines, often returning on themselves, for the straight path along which progress was once supposed to move, we are more than compensated by the new sense of coherence and rationality where illusion and extravagance once seemed to reign supreme. It teaches us that the dreams of a great intellect may be better worth our attention than the waking perceptions of ordinary men. Combining fragments of the old order with rudimentary outlines of the new, they lay open the secret laboratory of spiritual chemistry, and help to bridge over the interval separating the most widely contrasted phases of life and thought. Moreover, when we have once accustomed ourselves to break up past systems of philosophy

into their component elements, when we see how heterogeneous and ill-cemented were the parts of this and that proud edifice once offered as the only possible shelter against dangers threatening the very existence of civilisation—we shall be prepared for the application of a similar method to contemporary systems of equally ambitious pretensions; distinguishing that which is vital, fruitful, original, and progressive in their ideal synthesis from that which is of merely provisional and temporary value, when it is not the literary resuscitation of a dead past, visionary, retrograde, and mischievously wrong. And we shall also be reminded that the most precious ideas have only been shaped, preserved, and transmitted through association with earthy and perishable ingredients. The function of true criticism is, like Robert Browning's Roman jeweller, to turn on them 'the proper fiery acid' of purifying analysis which dissolves away the inferior metal and leaves behind the gold ring whereby thought and action are inseparably and fruitfully united.

Such, as it seems to us, is the proper spirit in which we should approach the great thinker whose works are to occupy us in this and the succeeding chapter. No philosopher has ever offered so extended and vulnerable a front to hostile criticism. None has so habitually provoked reprisals by his own incessant and searching attacks on all existing professions, customs, and beliefs. It might even be maintained that none has used the weapons of controversy with more unscrupulous zeal. And it might be added that he who dwells so much on the importance of consistency has occasionally denounced and ridiculed the very principles which he elsewhere upholds as demonstrated truths. It was an easy matter for others to complete the work of destruction which he had begun. His system seems at first sight to be made up of assertions, one more outrageous than another. The ascription of an objective concrete separate reality to verbal abstractions is assuredly the most astounding paradox ever

maintained even by a metaphysician. Yet this is the central article of Plato's creed. That body is essentially different from extension might, one would suppose, have been sufficiently clear to a mathematician who had the advantage of coming after Leucippus and Democritus. Their identity is implicitly affirmed in the *Timaeus*. That the soul cannot be both created and eternal; that the doctrine of metempsychosis is incompatible with the hereditary transmission of mental qualities; that a future immortality equivalent to, and proved by the same arguments as, our antenatal existence, would be neither a terror to the guilty nor a consolation to the righteous:—are propositions implicitly denied by Plato's psychology. Passing from theoretical to practical philosophy, it might be observed that respect for human life, respect for individual property, respect for marriage, and respect for truthfulness, are generally numbered among the strongest moral obligations, and those the observance of which most completely distinguishes civilised from savage man; while infanticide, communism, promiscuity, and the occasional employment of deliberate deceit, form part of Plato's scheme for the redemption of mankind. We need not do more than allude to those Dialogues where the phases and symptoms of unnameable passion are delineated with matchless eloquence, and apparently with at least as much sympathy as censure. Finally, from the standpoint of modern science, it might be urged that Plato used all his powerful influence to throw back physical speculation into the theological stage; that he deliberately discredited the doctrine of mechanical causation which, for us, is the most important achievement of early Greek thought; that he expatiated on the criminal folly of those who held the heavenly bodies to be, what we now know them to be, masses of dead matter with no special divinity about them; and that he proposed to punish this and other heresies with a severity distinguishable from the fitful fanaticism of his native city only by its more disciplined and rigorous application.

A plain man might find it difficult to understand how such extravagances could be deliberately propounded by the greatest intellect that Athens ever produced, except on the principle, dear to mediocrity, that genius is but little removed from madness, and that philosophical genius resembles it more nearly than any other. And his surprise would become much greater on learning that the best and wisest men of all ages have looked up with reverence to Plato; that thinkers of the most opposite schools have resorted to him for instruction and stimulation; that his writings have never been more attentively studied than in our own age—an age which has witnessed the destruction of so many illusive reputations; and that the foremost of English educators has used all his influence to promote the better understanding and appreciation of Plato as a prime element in academic culture—an influence now extended far beyond the limits of his own university through that translation of the Platonic Dialogues which is too well known to need any commendation on our part, but which we may mention as one of the principal authorities used for the present study, together with the work of a German scholar, his obligations to whom Prof. Jowett has acknowledged with characteristic grace.[1]

As a set-off against the list of paradoxes cited from Plato, it would be easy to quote a still longer list of brilliant contributions to the cause of truth and right, to strike a balance between the two, and to show that there was a preponderance on the positive side sufficiently great to justify the favourable verdict of posterity. We believe, however, that such a method would be as misleading as it is superficial. Neither Plato nor any other thinker of the same calibre—if any other there be—should be estimated by a simple analysis of his opinions. We must go back to the underlying forces of which individual

[1] *The Dialogues of Plato translated into English.* By B. Jowett, M.A. 2nd ed., 1875. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen.* Zweiter Theil, erste Abtheilung. *Plato und die alte Academie*, 3rd ed., 1875.

opinions are the resultant and the revelation. Every systematic synthesis represents certain profound intellectual tendencies, derived partly from previous philosophies, partly from the social environment, partly from the thinker's own genius and character. Each of such tendencies may be salutary and necessary, according to the conditions under which it comes into play, and yet two or more of them may form a highly unstable and explosive compound. Nevertheless, it is in speculative combinations that they are preserved and developed with the greatest distinctness, and it is there that we must seek for them if we would understand the psychological history of our race. And this is why we began by intimating that the lines of our investigation may take us back over ground which has been already traversed, and forward into regions which cannot at present be completely surveyed.

We have this great advantage in dealing with Plato—that his philosophical writings have come down to us entire, while the thinkers who preceded him are known only through fragments and second-hand reports. Nor is the difference merely accidental. Plato was the creator of speculative literature, properly so called: he was the first and also the greatest artist that ever clothed abstract thought in language of appropriate majesty and splendour; and it is probably to their beauty of form that we owe the preservation of his writings. Rather unfortunately, however, along with the genuine works of the master, a certain number of pieces have been handed down to us under his name, of which some are almost universally admitted to be spurious, while the authenticity of others is a question on which the best scholars are still divided. In the absence of any very cogent external evidence, an immense amount of industry and learning has been expended on this subject, and the arguments employed on both sides sometimes make us doubt whether the reasoning powers of philologists are better developed than, according to Plato, were those of mathematicians in his time. The

two extreme positions are occupied by Grote, who accepts the whole Alexandrian canon, and Krohn, who admits nothing but the *Republic*;[1] while much more serious critics, such as Schaarschmidt, reject along with a mass of worthless compositions several Dialogues almost equal in interest and importance to those whose authenticity has never been doubted. The great historian of Greece seems to have been rather undiscriminating both in his scepticism and in his belief; and the exclusive importance which he attributed to contemporary testimony, or to what passed for such with him, may have unduly biassed his judgment in both directions. As it happens, the authority of the canon is much weaker than Grote imagined; but even granting his extreme contention, our view of Plato's philosophy would not be seriously affected by it, for the pieces which are rejected by all other critics have no speculative importance whatever. The case would be far different were we to agree with those who impugn the genuineness of the *Parmenides*, the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, the *Philêbus*, and the *Laws*; for these compositions mark a new departure in Platonism amounting to a complete transformation of its fundamental principles, which indeed is one of the reasons why their authenticity has been denied. Apart, however, from the numerous evidences of Platonic authorship furnished by the Dialogues themselves, as well as by the indirect references to them in Aristotle's writings, it seems utterly incredible that a thinker scarcely, if at all, inferior to the master himself—as the supposed imitator must assuredly have been—should have consented to let his reasonings pass current under a false name, and that, too, the name of one whose teaching he in some respects controverted; while there is a further difficulty in assuming that his existence could pass unnoticed at a period marked by intense literary and philosophical activity. Readers who

[1] Krohn, *Der Platonische Staat*, Halle 1876. [I know this work only through Chiapelli, *Della Interpretazione panteistica di Platone*, Florence, 1881.]

wish for fuller information on the subject will find in Zeller's pages a careful and lucid digest of the whole controversy leading to a moderately conservative conclusion. Others will doubtless be content to accept Prof. Jowett's verdict, that 'on the whole not a sixteenth part of the writings which pass under the name of Plato, if we exclude the works rejected by the ancients themselves, can be fairly doubted by those who are willing to allow that a considerable change and growth may have taken place in his philosophy.'[1] To which we may add that the Platonic dialogues, whether the work of one or more hands, and however widely differing among themselves, together represent a single phase of thought, and are appropriately studied as a connected series.

We have assumed in our last remark that it is possible to discover some sort of chronological order in the Platonic Dialogues, and to trace a certain progressive modification in the general tenor of their teaching from first to last. But here also the positive evidence is very scanty, and a variety of conflicting theories have been propounded by eminent scholars. Where so much is left to conjecture, the best that can be said for any hypothesis is that it explains the facts according to known laws of thought. It will be for the reader to judge whether our own attempt to trace the gradual evolution of Plato's system satisfies this condition. In making it we shall take as a basis the arrangement adopted by Prof. Jowett, with some reservations hereafter to be specified.

Before entering on our task, one more difficulty remains to be noticed. Plato, although the greatest master of prose composition that ever lived, and for his time a remarkably voluminous author, cherished a strong dislike for books, and even affected to regret that the art of writing had ever been invented. A man, he said, might amuse himself by putting down his ideas on paper, and might even find written

[1] III., 418.

memoranda useful for private reference, but the only instruction worth speaking of was conveyed by oral communication, which made it possible for objections unforeseen by the teacher to be freely urged and answered.[1] Such had been the method of Socrates, and such was doubtless the practice of Plato himself whenever it was possible for him to set forth his philosophy by word of mouth. It has been supposed, for this reason, that the great writer did not take his own books in earnest, and wished them to be regarded as no more than the elegant recreations of a leisure hour, while his deeper and more serious thoughts were reserved for lectures and conversations, of which, beyond a few allusions in Aristotle, every record has perished. That such, however, was not the case, may be easily shown. In the first place it is evident, from the extreme pains taken by Plato to throw his philosophical expositions into conversational form, that he did not despair of providing a literary substitute for spoken dialogue. Secondly, it is a strong confirmation of this theory that Aristotle, a personal friend and pupil of Plato during many years, should so frequently refer to the Dialogues as authoritative evidences of his master's opinions on the most important topics. And, lastly, if it can be shown that the documents in question do actually embody a comprehensive and connected view of life and of the world, we shall feel satisfied that the oral teaching of Plato, had it been preserved, would not modify in any material degree the impression conveyed by his written compositions.

II.

There is a story that Plato used to thank the gods, in what some might consider a rather Pharisaic spirit, for having made him a human being instead of a brute, a man instead of a woman, and a Greek instead of a barbarian ; but more than

[1] *Phaedr.*, p. 274 B ff.

anything else for having permitted him to be born in the time of Socrates. It will be observed that all these blessings tended in one direction, the complete supremacy in his character of reason over impulse and sense. To assert, extend, and organise that supremacy was the object of his whole life. Such, indeed, had been the object of all his predecessors, and such, stated generally, has been always and everywhere the object of philosophy; but none had pursued it so consciously before, and none has proclaimed it so enthusiastically since then. Now, although Plato could not have done this without a far wider range of knowledge and experience than Socrates had possessed, it was only by virtue of the Socratic method that his other gifts and acquisitions could be turned to complete account; while, conversely, it was only when brought to bear upon these new materials that the full power of the method itself could be revealed. To be continually asking and answering questions; to elicit information from everybody on every subject worth knowing; and to elaborate the resulting mass of intellectual material into the most convenient form for practical application or for further transmission, was the secret of true wisdom with the sage of the market-place and the workshop. But the process of dialectic investigation as an end in itself, the intense personal interest of conversation with living men and women of all classes, the impatience for immediate and visible results, had gradually induced Socrates to restrict within far too narrow limits the sources whence his ideas were derived and the purposes to which they were applied. And the dialectic method itself could not but be checked in its internal development by this want of breadth and variety in the topics submitted to its grasp. Therefore the death of Socrates, however lamentable in its occasion, was an unmixed benefit to the cause for which he laboured, by arresting (as we must suppose it to have arrested) the popular and indiscriminate employment of his cross-examining method,

liberating his ablest disciple from the ascendency of a revered master, and inducing him to reconsider the whole question of human knowledge and action from a remoter point of view. For, be it observed that Plato did not begin where Socrates had left off; he went back to the germinal point of the whole system, and proceeded to reconstruct it on new lines of his own. The loss of those whom we love habitually leads our thoughts back to the time of our first acquaintance with them, or, if these are ascertainable, to the circumstances of their early life. In this manner Plato seems to have been at first occupied exclusively with the starting-point of his friend's philosophy, and we know, from the narrative given in the *Apologia*, under what form he came to conceive it. We have attempted to show that the account alluded to cannot be entirely historical. Nevertheless it seems sufficiently clear that Socrates began with a conviction of his own ignorance, and that his efforts to improve others were prefaced by the extraction of a similar confession of ignorance on their part. It is also certain that through life he regarded the causes of physical phenomena as placed beyond the reach of human reason and reserved by the gods for their own exclusive cognisance, pointing, by way of proof, to the notorious differences of opinion prevalent among those who had meddled with such matters. Thus, his scepticism worked in two directions, but on the one side it was only provisional and on the other it was only partial. Plato began by combining the two. He maintained that human nescience is universal and necessary; that the gods had reserved all knowledge for themselves; and that the only wisdom left for men is a consciousness of their absolute ignorance. The Socratic starting-point gave the centre of his agnostic circle; the Socratic theology gave the distance at which it was described. Here we have to note two things—first, the breadth of generalisation which distinguishes the disciple from the master; and, secondly, the symptoms of a strong

religious reaction against Greek humanism. Even before the end of the Peloponnesian War, evidence of this reaction had appeared, and the *Bacchae* of Euripides bears striking testimony to its gloomy and fanatical character. The last agony of Athens, the collapse of her power, and the subsequent period of oligarchic terrorism, must have given a stimulus to superstition like that which quite recently afflicted France with an epidemic of apparitions and pilgrimages almost too childish for belief. Plato followed the general movement, although on a much higher plane. While looking down with undisguised contempt on the immoral idolatry of his countrymen, he was equally opposed to the irreligion of the New Learning, and, had an opportunity been given him, he would, like the Reformers of the sixteenth century, have put down both with impartial severity. Nor was this the only analogy between his position and that of a Luther or a Calvin. Like them, and indeed like all great religious teachers, he exalted the Creator by enlarging on the nothingness of the creature; just as Christianity exhibits the holiness of God in contrast and correlation with the sinfulness of unregenerate hearts; just as to Pindar man's life seemed but the fleeting shadow in a dream when compared with the beauty and strength and immortality of the Olympian divinities; so also did Plato deepen the gloom of human ignorance that he might bring out in dazzling relief the fulness of that knowledge which he had been taught to prize as a supreme ideal, but which, for that very reason, seemed proper to the highest existences alone. And we shall presently see how Plato also discovered a principle in man by virtue of which he could claim kindred with the supernatural, and elaborated a scheme of intellectual mediation by which the fallen spirit could be regenerated and made a partaker in the kingdom of speculative truth.

Yet if Plato's theology, from its predominantly rational character, seemed to neglect some feelings which were better

satisfied by the earlier or the later faiths of mankind, we cannot say that it really excluded them. The unfading strength of the old gods was comprehended in the self-existence of absolute ideas, and moral goodness was only a particular application of reason to the conduct of life. An emotional or imaginative element was also contributed by the theory that every faculty exercised without a reasoned consciousness of its processes and aims was due to some saving grace and inspiration from a superhuman power. It was thus, according to Plato, that poets and artists were able to produce works of which they were not able to render an intelligent account; and it was thus that society continued to hold together with such an exceedingly small amount of wisdom and virtue. Here, however, we have to observe a marked difference between the religious teachers pure and simple, and the Greek philosopher who was a dialectician even more than he was a divine. For Plato held that providential government was merely provisional; that the inspired prophet stood on a distinctly lower level than the critical, self-conscious thinker; that ratiocination and not poetry was the highest function of mind; and that action should be reorganised in accordance with demonstrably certain principles.[1]

This search after a scientific basis for conduct was quite in the spirit of Socrates, but Plato seems to have set very little value on his master's positive contributions to the systematisation of life. We have seen that the *Apologia* is purely sceptical in its tendency; and we find a whole group of Dialogues, probably the earliest of Plato's compositions, marked by the same negative, inconclusive tone. These are commonly spoken of as Socratic, and so no doubt they are in reference to the subjects discussed; but they would be more accurately described as an attempt to turn the Socratic method against its first originator. We know from another source that tem-

[1] See Zeller's note on the θεία μοῖρα, *op. cit.* p. 497.

perance, fortitude, and piety were the chief virtues inculcated and practised by Socrates; while friendship, if not strictly speaking a virtue, was equally with them one of his prime interests in life. It is clear that he considered them the most appropriate and remunerative subjects of philosophical discussion; that he could define their nature to his own satisfaction; and that he had, in fact, defined them as so many varieties of wisdom. Now, Plato has devoted a separate Dialogue to each of the conceptions in question,[1] and in each instance he represents Socrates, who is the principal spokesman, as professedly ignorant of the whole subject under discussion, offering no definition of his own (or at least none that he will stand by), but asking his interlocutors for theirs, and pulling it to pieces when it is given. We do, indeed, find a tendency to resolve the virtues into knowledge, and, so far, either to identify them with one another, or to carry them up into the unity of a higher idea. To this extent Plato follows in the footsteps of his master, but a result which had completely satisfied Socrates became the starting-point of a new investigation with his successor. If virtue is knowledge, it must be knowledge of what we most desire—of the good. Thus the original difficulty returns under another form, or rather we have merely restated it in different terms. For, to ask what is temperance or fortitude, is equivalent to asking what is its use. And this was so obvious to Socrates, that, apparently, he never thought of distinguishing between the two questions. But no sooner were they distinguished than his reduction of all morality to a single principle was shown to be illusive. For each specific virtue had been substituted the knowledge of a specific utility, and that was all. Unless the highest good were one, the means by which it was sought could not converge to a single point; nor, according to the new ideas, could their mastery come under the jurisdiction of a single art.

[1] The *Charmides*, *Laches*, *Euthyphro*, and *Lysis*

We may also suspect that Plato was dissatisfied not only with the positive results obtained by Socrates, but also with the Socratic method of constructing general definitions. To rise from the part to the whole, from particular instances to general notions, was a popular rather than a scientific process; and sometimes it only amounted to taking the current explanations and modifying them to suit the exigencies of ordinary experience. The resulting definitions could never be more than tentative, and a skilful dialectician could always upset them by producing an unlooked-for exception, or by discovering an ambiguity in the terms by which they were conveyed.

Before ascertaining in what direction Plato sought for an outlet from these accumulated difficulties, we have to glance at a Dialogue belonging apparently to his earliest compositions, but in one respect occupying a position apart from the rest. The *Crito* tells us for what reasons Socrates refused to escape from the fate which awaited him in prison, as, with the assistance of generous friends, he might easily have done. The aged philosopher considered that by adopting such a course he would be setting the Athenian laws at defiance, and doing what in him lay to destroy their validity. Now, we know that the historical Socrates held justice to consist in obedience to the law of the land; and here for once we find Plato agreeing with him on a definite and positive issue. Such a sudden and singular abandonment of the sceptical attitude merits our attention. It might, indeed, be said that Plato's inconsistencies defy all attempts at reconciliation, and that in this instance the desire to set his maligned friend in a favourable light triumphed over the claims of un impracticable logic. We think, however, that a deeper and truer solution can be found. If the *Crito* inculcates obedience to the laws as a binding obligation, it is not for the reasons which, according to Xenophon, were adduced by the real Socrates in his dispute with the Sophist Hippias; general utility and private interest were the sole grounds appealed to then. Plato, on

the other hand, ignores all such external considerations. True to his usual method, he reduces the legal conscience to a purely dialectical process. Just as in an argument the disputants are, or ought to be, bound by their own admissions, so also the citizen is bound by a tacit compact to fulfil the laws whose protection he has enjoyed and of whose claims his protracted residence is an acknowledgment. Here there is no need of a transcendent foundation for morality, as none but logical considerations come into play. And it also deserves to be noticed that, where this very idea of an obligation based on acceptance of services had been employed by Socrates, it was discarded by Plato. In the *Euthyphro*, a Dialogue devoted to the discussion of piety, the theory that religion rests on an exchange of good offices between gods and men is mentioned only to be scornfully rejected. Equally remarkable, and equally in advance of the Socratic standpoint, is a principle enunciated in the *Crito*, that retaliation is wrong, and that evil should never be returned for evil.[1] And both are distinct anticipations of the earliest Christian teaching, though both are implicitly contradicted by the so-called religious services celebrated in Christian churches, and by the doctrine of a divine retribution which is only not retaliatory because it is infinitely in excess of the provocation received.

If the earliest of Plato's enquiries, while they deal with the same subjects and are conducted on the same method as those cultivated by Socrates, evince a breadth of view surpassing anything recorded of him by Xenophon, they also exhibit traces of an influence disconnected with and inferior in value to his. On more than one occasion[2] Plato reasons, or rather quibbles, in a style which he has elsewhere held up to ridicule as characteristic of the Sophists, with such success that the name of sophistry has clung to it ever since.

[1] P. 49, A ff. Zeller, 142.

[2] *Charmides*, 161 E; *Lysis*, 212 C.

Indeed, some of the verbal fallacies employed are so transparent that we can hardly suppose them to be unintentional, and we are forced to conclude that the young despiser of human wisdom was resolved to maintain his thesis with any weapons, good or bad, which came to hand. And it seems much more likely that he learned the eristic art from Protagoras or from his disciples than from Socrates. Plato spent a large part of his life in opposing the Sophists—that is to say, the paid professors of wisdom and virtue; but in spite of, or rather perhaps because of, this very opposition, he was profoundly affected by their teaching and example. It is quite conceivable, although we do not find it stated as a fact, that he resorted to them for instruction when a young man, and before coming under the influence of Socrates, an event which did not take place until he was twenty years old; or he may have been directed to them by Socrates himself. With all its originality, his style bears traces of a rhetorical training in the more elaborate passages, and the Sophists were the only teachers of rhetoric then to be found. His habit of clothing philosophical lessons in the form of a myth seems also to have been borrowed from them. It would, therefore, not be surprising that he should cultivate their argumentative legerdemain side by side with the more strict and severe discipline of Socratic dialectics.

Plato does, no doubt, make it a charge against the Sophists that their doctrines are not only false and immoral, but that they are put together without any regard for logical coherence. It would seem, however, that this style of attack belongs rather to the later and constructive than to the earlier and receptive period of his intellectual development. The original cause of his antagonism to the professional teachers seems to have been their general pretensions to knowledge, which, from the standpoint of universal scepticism, were, of course, utterly illusive; together with a feeling of aristocratic contempt for a calling in which considerations of

pecuniary interest were involved, heightened in this instance by a conviction that the buyer received nothing better than a sham article in exchange for his money. Here, again, a parallel suggests itself with the first preaching of the Gospel. The attitude of Christ towards the scribes and Pharisees, as also that of St. Paul towards Simon Magus, will help us to understand how Plato, in another order of spiritual teaching, must have regarded the hypocrisy of wisdom, the intrusion of fraudulent traders into the temple of Delphic inspiration, and the sale of a priceless blessing whose unlimited diffusion should have been its own and only reward.

Yet throughout the philosophy of Plato we meet with a tendency to ambiguous shiftings and reversions of which, here also, due account must be taken. That curious blending of love and hate which forms the subject of a mystical lyric in Mr. Browning's *Pippa Passes*, is not without its counterpart in purely rationalistic discussion. If Plato used the Socratic method to dissolve away much that was untrue, because incomplete, in Socratism, he used it also to absorb much that was deserving of development in Sophisticism. If, in one sense, the latter was a direct reversal of his master's teaching, in another it served as a sort of intermediary between that teaching and the unenlightened consciousness of mankind. The shadow should not be confounded with the substance, but it might show by contiguity, by resemblance, and by contrast where the solid reality lay, what were its outlines, and how its characteristic lights might best be viewed.

Such is the mild and conciliatory mode of treatment at first adopted by Plato in dealing with the principal representative of the Sophists—Protagoras. In the Dialogue which bears his name the famous humanist is presented to us as a professor of popular unsystematised morality, proving by a variety of practical arguments and ingenious illustrations that virtue can be taught, and that the preservation of social order depends upon the possibility of teaching it; but unwilling to

go along with the reasonings by which Socrates shows the applicability of rigorously scientific principles to conduct. Plato has here taken up one side of the Socratic ethics, and developed it into a complete and self-consistent theory. The doctrine inculcated is that form of utilitarianism to which Mr. Sidgwick has given the name of egoistic hedonism. We are brought to admit that virtue is one because the various virtues reduce themselves in the last analysis to prudence. It is assumed that happiness, in the sense of pleasure and the absence of pain, is the sole end of life. Duty is identified with interest. Morality is a calculus for computing quantities of pleasure and pain, and all virtuous action is a means for securing a maximum of the one together with a minimum of the other. Ethical science is constituted; it can be taught like mathematics; and so far the Sophists are right, but they have arrived at the truth by a purely empirical process; while Socrates, who professes to know nothing, by simply following the dialectic impulse strikes out a generalisation which at once confirms and explains their position; yet from self-sufficiency or prejudice they refuse to agree with him in taking their stand on its only logical foundation.

That Plato put forward the ethical theory of the Protagoras in perfect good faith cannot, we think, be doubted; although in other writings he has repudiated hedonism with contemptuous aversion; and it seems equally evident that this was his earliest contribution to positive thought. Of all his theories it is the simplest and most Socratic; for Socrates, in endeavouring to reclaim the foolish or vicious, often spoke as if self-interest was the paramount principle of human nature; although, had his assumption been formulated as an abstract proposition, he too might have shrunk from it with something of the uneasiness attributed to Protagoras. And from internal evidence of another description we have reason to think that the Dialogue in question is a comparatively juvenile production, remembering always that the period of youth was much more

protracted among the Greeks than among ourselves. One almost seems to recognise the hand of a boy just out of college, who delights in drawing caricatures of his teachers; and who, while he looks down on classical scholarship in comparison with more living and practical topics, is not sorry to show that he can discuss a difficult passage from Simonides better than the professors themselves.

III.

Our survey of Plato's first period is now complete; and we have to enter on the far more arduous task of tracing out the circumstances, impulses, and ideas by which all the scattered materials of Greek life, Greek art, and Greek thought were shaped into a new system and stamped with the impress of an imperishable genius. At the threshold of this second period the personality of Plato himself emerges into greater distinctness, and we have to consider what part it played in an evolution where universal tendencies and individual leanings were inseparably combined.

Plato was born in the year 429, or according to some accounts 427, and died 347 B.C. Few incidents in his biography can be fixed with any certainty; but for our purpose the most general facts are also the most interesting, and about these we have tolerably trustworthy information. His family was one of the noblest in Athens, being connected on the father's side with Codrus, and on the mother's with Solon; while two of his kinsmen, Critias and Charmides, were among the chiefs of the oligarchic party. It is uncertain whether he inherited any considerable property, nor is the question one of much importance. It seems clear that he enjoyed the best education Athens could afford, and that through life he possessed a competence sufficient to relieve him from the cares of material existence. Possibly the preference which he expressed, when far advanced in life, for moderate health and

wealth arose from having experienced those advantages himself. If the busts which bear his name are to be trusted, he was remarkably beautiful, and, like some other philosophers, very careful of his personal appearance. Perhaps some reminiscences of the admiration bestowed on himself may be mingled with those pictures of youthful loveliness and of its exciting effect on the imaginations of older men which give such grace and animation to his earliest dialogues. We know not whether as lover or beloved he passed unscathed through the storms of passion which he has so powerfully described, nor whether his apparently intimate acquaintance with them is due to divination or to regretful experience. We may pass by in silence whatever is related on this subject, with the certainty that, whether true or not, scandalous stories could not fail to be circulated about him.

It was natural that one who united a great intellect to a glowing temperament should turn his thoughts to poetry. Plato wrote a quantity of verses—verse-making had become fashionable just then—but wisely committed them to the flames on making the acquaintance of Socrates. It may well be doubted whether the author of the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* would ever have attained eminence in metrical composition, even had he lived in an age far more favourable to poetic inspiration than that which came after the flowering time of Attic art. It seems as if Plato, with all his fervour, fancy, and dramatic skill, lacked the most essential quality of a singer; his finest passages are on a level with the highest poetry, and yet they are separated from it by a chasm more easily felt than described. Aristotle, whom we think of as hard and dry and cold, sometimes comes much nearer to the true lyric cry. And, as if to mark out Plato's style still more distinctly from every other, it is also deficient in oratorical power. The philosopher evidently thought that he could beat the rhetoricians on their own ground; if the *Menexenus* be genuine, he tried to do so and failed; and even without its

testimony we are entitled to say as much on the strength of shorter attempts. We must even take leave to doubt whether dialogue, properly so called, was Plato's forte. Where one speaker is placed at such a height above the others as Socrates, or the Eleatic Stranger, or the Athenian in the *Laws*, there cannot be any real conversation. The other interlocutors are good listeners, and serve to break the monotony of a continuous exposition by their expressions of assent or even by their occasional inability to follow the argument, but give no real help or stimulus. And when allowed to offer an opinion of their own, they, too, lapse into a monologue, addressed, as our silent trains of thought habitually are, to an imaginary auditor whose sympathy and support are necessary but are also secure. Yet if Plato's style is neither exactly poetical, nor oratorical, nor conversational, it has affinities with each of these three varieties; it represents the common root from which they spring, and brings us, better than any other species of composition, into immediate contact with the mind of the writer. The Platonic Socrates has eyes like those of a portrait which follow us wherever we turn, and through which we can read his inmost soul, which is no other than the universal reason of humanity in the delighted surprise of its first awakening to self-conscious activity. The poet thinks and feels for us; the orator makes our thoughts and feelings his own, and then restores them to us in a concentrated form, 'receiving in vapour what he gives back in a flood.' Plato removes every obstacle to the free development of our faculties; he teaches us by his own example how to think and to feel for ourselves. If Socrates personified philosophy, Plato has reproduced the personification in artistic form with such masterly effect that its influence has been extended through all ages and over the whole civilised world. This portrait stands as an intermediary between its original and the far-reaching effects indirectly due to his dialectic inspiration, like that universal soul which Plato himself has placed between

the supreme artificer and the material world, that it might bring the fleeting contents of space and time into harmony with uncreated and everlasting ideas.

To paint Socrates at his highest and his best, it was necessary to break through the narrow limits of his historic individuality, and to show how, had they been presented to him, he would have dealt with problems outside the experience of a home-staying Athenian citizen. The founder of idealism—that is to say, the realisation of reason, the systematic application of thought to life—had succeeded in his task because he had embodied the noblest elements of the Athenian Dêmos, orderliness, patriotism, self-control, and publicity of debate, together with a receptive intelligence for improvements effected in other states. But, just as the impulse which enabled those qualities to tell decisively on Greek history at a moment of inestimable importance came from the Athenian aristocracy, with its Dorian sympathies, its adventurous ambition, and its keen attention to foreign affairs, so also did Plato, carrying the same spirit into philosophy, bring the dialectic method into contact with older and broader currents of speculation, and employ it to recognise the whole spiritual activity of his race.

A strong desire for reform must always be preceded by a deep dissatisfaction with things as they are; and if the reform is to be very sweeping the discontent must be equally comprehensive. Hence the great renovators of human life have been remarkable for the severity with which they have denounced the failings of the world where they were placed, whether as regards persons, habits, institutions, or beliefs. Yet to speak of their attitude as pessimistic would either be unfair, or would betray an unpardonable inability to discriminate between two utterly different theories of existence. Nothing can well be more unlike the systematised pusillanimity of those lost souls, without courage and without hope, who find a consolation for their own failure in the belief that everything

is a failure, than the fiery energy which is drawn into a perpetual tension by the contrast of what is with the vision of what yet may be. But if pessimism paralyses every generous effort and aspiration by teaching that misery is the irremediable lot of animated beings, or even, in the last analysis, of all being, the opposing theory of optimism exercises as deadly an influence when it induces men to believe that their present condition is, on the whole, a satisfactory one, or that at worst wrong will be righted without any criticism or interference on their part. Even those who believe progress to have been, so far, the most certain fact in human history, cannot blind themselves to the existence of enormous forces ever tending to draw society back into the barbarism and brutality of its primitive condition; and they know also, that whatever ground we have won is due to the efforts of a small minority, who were never weary of urging forward their more sluggish companions, without caring what angry susceptibilities they might arouse—risking recrimination, insult, and outrage, so that only, under whatever form, whether of divine mandate or of scientific demonstration, the message of humanity to her children might be delivered in time. Nor is it only with immobility that they have had to contend. Gains in one direction are frequently balanced by losses in another; while at certain periods there is a distinct retrogression along the whole line. And it is well if, amid the general decline to a lower level, sinister voices are not heard proclaiming that the multitude may safely trust to their own promptings, and that self-indulgence or self-will should be the only law of life. It is also on such occasions that the rallying cry is most needed, and that the born leaders of civilisation must put forth their most strenuous efforts to arrest the disheartened fugitives and to denounce the treacherous guides. It was in this aspect that Plato viewed his age; and he set himself to continue the task which Socrates had attempted, but had been trampled down in endeavouring to achieve.

The illustrious Italian poet and essayist, Leopardi, has observed that the idea of the world as a vast confederacy banded together for the repression of everything good and great and true, originated with Jesus Christ.[1] It is surprising that so accomplished a Hellenist should not have attributed the priority to Plato. It is true that he does not speak of the world itself in Leopardi's sense, because to him it meant something different—a divinely created order which it would have been blasphemy to revile ; but the thing is everywhere present to his thoughts under other names, and he pursues it with relentless hostility. He looks on the great majority of the human race, individually and socially, in their beliefs and in their practices, as utterly corrupt, and blinded to such an extent that they are ready to turn and rend any one who attempts to lead them into a better path. The many 'know not wisdom and virtue, and are always busy with gluttony and sensuality. Like cattle, with their eyes always looking down and their heads stooping, not, indeed, to the earth, but to the dining-table, they fatten and feed and breed, and in their excessive love of these delights they kick and butt at one another with horns and hoofs which are made of iron ; and they kill one another by reason of their insatiable lust.'[2] Their ideal is the man who nurses up his desires to the utmost intensity, and procures the means for gratifying them by fraud or violence. The assembled multitude resembles a strong and fierce brute expressing its wishes by inarticulate grunts, which the popular leaders make it their business to understand and to comply with. A statesman of the nobler kind who should attempt to benefit the people by thwarting their foolish appetites will be denounced as a public enemy by the demagogues, and will stand no more chance of acquittal than a physician if he were brought before a jury of children by the pastry-cook.

[1] *Pensieri*, lxxxiv and lxxxv.
[2] *Repub.*, 586, A. Jowett, III , p. 481.

That an Athenian, or, indeed, any Greek gentleman, should regard the common people with contempt and aversion was nothing strange. A generation earlier such feelings would have led Plato to look on the overthrow of democracy and the establishment of an aristocratic government as the remedy for every evil. The upper classes, accustomed to decorate themselves with complimentary titles, had actually come to believe that all who belonged to them were paragons of wisdom and goodness. With the rule of the Thirty came a terrible awakening. In a few months more atrocities were perpetrated by the oligarchs than the Dêmos had been guilty of in as many generations. It was shown that accomplished gentlemen like Critias were only distinguished from the common herd by their greater impatience of opposition and by the more destructive fury of their appetites. With Plato, at least, all allusions on this head came to an end. He now 'smiled at the claims of long descent,' considering that 'every man has had thousands and thousands of progenitors, and among them have been rich and poor, kings and slaves, Hellenes and barbarians, many times over;' and even the possession of a large landed property ceased to inspire him with any respect when he compared it with the surface of the whole earth.

There still remained one form of government to be tried, the despotic rule of a single individual. In the course of his travels Plato came into contact with an able and powerful specimen of the tyrant class, the elder Dionysius. A number of stories relating to their intercourse have been preserved; but the different versions disagree very widely, and none of them can be entirely trusted. It seems certain, however, that Plato gave great offence to the tyrant by his freedom of speech, that he narrowly escaped death, and that he was sold into slavery, from which condition he was redeemed by the generosity of Anniceris, a Cyrenaean philosopher. It is supposed that the scathing description in which Plato has

held up to everlasting infamy the unworthy possessor of absolute power—a description long afterwards applied by Tacitus to the vilest of the Roman emperors—was suggested by the type which had come under his own observation in Sicily.

Of all existing constitutions that of Sparta approached nearest to the ideal of Plato, or, rather, he regarded it as the least degraded. He liked the conservatism of the Spartans, their rigid discipline, their haughty courage, the participation of their daughters in gymnastic exercises, the austerity of their manners, and their respect for old age; but he found much to censure both in their ancient customs and in the characteristics which the possession of empire had recently developed among them. He speaks with disapproval of their exclusively military organisation, of their contempt for philosophy, and of the open sanction which they gave to practices barely tolerated at Athens. And he also comments on their covetousness, their harshness to inferiors, and their haste to throw off the restraints of the law whenever detection could be evaded.[1]

So far we have spoken as if Plato regarded the various false polities existing around him as so many fixed and disconnected types. This, however, was not the case. The present state of things was bad enough, but it threatened to become worse wherever worse was possible. The constitutions exhibiting a mixture of good and evil contained within themselves the seeds of a further corruption, and tended to pass into the form standing next in order on the downward slope. Spartan timocracy must in time become an oligarchy, to oligarchy would succeed democracy, and this would end in tyranny, beyond which no further fall was possible.[2] The degraded condition of Syracuse seemed likely to be the last outcome of Hellenic civilisation. We know not how far the gloomy forebodings of Plato may have been justified by his

[1] Zeller, *op. cit.*, 777-8.

[2] *Republ.*, VIII. and IX.

own experience, but he sketched with prophetic insight the future fortunes of the Roman Republic. Every phase of the progressive degeneration is exemplified in its later history, and the order of their succession is most faithfully preserved. Even his portraits of individual timocrats, oligarchs, demagogues, and despots are reproduced to the life in the pages of Plutarch, of Cicero, and of Tacitus.

If our critic found so little to admire in Hellas, still less did he seek for the realisation of his dreams in the outlying world. The lessons of Protagoras had not been wasted on him, and, unlike the nature-worshippers of the eighteenth century, he never fell into the delusion that wisdom and virtue had their home in primaeval forests or in corrupt Oriental despotisms. For him, Greek civilisation, with all its faults, was the best thing that human nature had produced, the only hearth of intellectual culture, the only soil where new experiments in education and government could be tried. He could go down to the roots of thought, of language, and of society; he could construct a new style, a new system, and a new polity, from the foundation up; he could grasp all the tendencies that came under his immediate observation, and follow them out to their utmost possibilities of expansion; but his vast powers of analysis and generalisation remained subject to this restriction, that a Hellene he was and a Hellene he remained to the end.

A Hellene, and an aristocrat as well. Or, using the word in its most comprehensive sense, we may say that he was an aristocrat all round, a believer in inherent superiorities of race, sex, birth, breeding, and age. Everywhere we find him restlessly searching after the wisest, purest, best, until at last, passing beyond the limits of existence itself, words fail him to describe the absolute ineffable only good, not being and not knowledge, but creating and inspiring both. Thus it came to pass that his hopes of effecting a thorough reform did not lie in an appeal to the masses, but in the selection and

seclusion from evil influences of a few intelligent youths. Here we may detect a remarkable divergence between him and his master. Socrates, himself a man of the people, did not like to hear the Athenians abused. If they went wrong, it was, he said, the fault of their leaders.[1] But according to Plato, it was from the people themselves that corruption originally proceeded, it was they who instilled false lessons into the most intelligent minds, teaching them from their very infancy to prefer show to substance, success to merit, and pleasure to virtue; making the study of popular caprice the sure road to power, and poisoning the very sources of morality by circulating blasphemous stories about the gods—stories which represented them as weak, sensual, capricious beings, setting an example of iniquity themselves, and quite willing to pardon it in men on condition of going shares in the spoil. The poets had a great deal to do with the manufacture of these discreditable myths; and towards poets as a class Plato entertained feelings of mingled admiration and contempt. As an artist, he was powerfully attracted by the beauty of their works; as a theologian, he believed them to be the channels of divine inspiration, and sometimes also the guardians of a sacred tradition; but as a critic, he was shocked at their incapacity to explain the meaning of their own works, especially when it was coupled with ridiculous pretensions to omniscience; and he regarded the imitative character of their productions as illustrating, in a particularly flagrant manner, that substitution of appearance for reality which, according to his philosophy, was the deepest source of error and evil.

If private society exercised a demoralising influence on its most gifted members, and in turn suffered a still further debasement by listening to their opinions, the same fatal interchange of corruption went on still more actively in public life, so far, at least, as Athenian democracy was concerned. The people would tolerate no statesman who did not pamper

[1] Xenophon, *Mem.*, III., v., 18.

their appetites; and the statesmen, for their own ambitious purposes, attended solely to the material wants of the people, entirely neglecting their spiritual interests. In this respect, Pericles, the most admired of all, had been the chief of sinners; for 'he was the first who gave the people pay and made them idle and cowardly, and encouraged them in the love of talk and of money.' Accordingly, a righteous retribution overtook him, for 'at the very end of his life they convicted him of theft, and almost put him to death.' So it had been with the other boasted leaders, Miltiades, Themistocles, and Cimon; all suffered from what is falsely called the ingratitude of the people. Like injudicious keepers, they had made the animal committed to their charge fiercer instead of gentler, until its savage propensities were turned against themselves. Or, changing the comparison, they were like purveyors of luxury, who fed the State on a diet to which its present 'ulcerated and swollen condition' was due. They had 'filled the city full of harbours, and docks, and walls, and revenues and all that, and had left no room for justice and temperance.' One only among the elder statesmen, Aristeides, is excepted from this sweeping condemnation, and, similarly, Socrates is declared to have been the only true statesman of his time.[1]

On turning from the conduct of State affairs to the administration of justice in the popular law courts, we find the same tale of iniquity repeated, but this time with more telling satire, as Plato is speaking from his own immediate experience. He considers that, under the manipulation of dexterous pleaders, judicial decisions had come to be framed with a total disregard of righteousness. That disputed claims should be submitted to a popular tribunal and settled by counting heads was, indeed, according to his view, a virtual admission that no absolute standard of justice existed; that moral truth varied with individual opinion. And this

[1] *Gorgias*, 515, C., ff. Jowett, II., 396-400.

is how the character of the lawyer had been moulded in consequence :—

He has become keen and shrewd ; he has learned how to flatter his master in word and indulge him in deed ; but his soul is small and unrighteous. His slavish condition has deprived him of growth and uprightness and independence ; dangers and fears which were too much for his truth and honesty came upon him in early years, when the tenderness of youth was unequal to them, and he has been driven into crooked ways ; from the first he has practised deception and retaliation, and has become stunted and warped. And so he has passed out of youth into manhood, having no soundness in him, and is now, as he thinks, a master in wisdom.[1]

To make matters worse, the original of this unflattering portrait was rapidly becoming the most powerful man in the State. Increasing specialisation had completely separated the military and political functions which had formerly been discharged by a single eminent individual, and the business of legislation was also becoming a distinct profession. No orator could obtain a hearing in the assembly who had not a technical acquaintance with the subject of deliberation, if it admitted of technical treatment, which was much more frequently the case now than in the preceding generation. As a consequence of this revolution, the ultimate power of supervision and control was passing into the hands of the law courts, where general questions could be discussed in a more popular style, and often from a wider or a more sentimental point of view. They were, in fact, beginning to wield an authority like that exercised until quite lately by the press in modern Europe, only that its action was much more direct and formidable. A vote of the Ecclêsia could only deprive a statesman of office : a vote of the Dicastery might deprive him of civil rights, home, freedom, property, or even life itself. Moreover, with the loss of empire and the decline of public spirit, private interests had come to attract a proportionately larger share of attention ; and unobtrusive citi-

[1] *Theætêtus*, 173. A. Jowett, IV., 322.

zens who had formerly escaped from the storms of party passion, now found themselves marked out as a prey by every fluent and dexterous pleader who could find an excuse for dragging them before the courts. Rhetoric was hailed as the supreme art, enabling its possessor to dispense with every other study, and promising young men were encouraged to look on it as the most paying line they could take up. Even those whose civil status or natural timidity precluded them from speaking in public could gain an eminent and envied position by composing speeches for others to deliver. Behind these, again, stood the professed masters of rhetoric, claiming to direct the education and the whole public opinion of the age by their lectures and pamphlets. Philosophy was not excluded from their system of training, but it occupied a strictly subordinate place. Studied in moderation, they looked on it as a bracing mental exercise and a repertory of sounding commonplaces, if not as a solvent for old-fashioned notions of honesty; but a close adherence to the laws of logic or to the principles of morality seemed puerile pedantry to the elegant stylists who made themselves the advocates of every crowned filibuster abroad, while preaching a policy of peace at any price at home.

It is evident that the fate of Socrates was constantly in Plato's thoughts, and greatly embittered his scorn for the multitude as well as for those who made themselves its ministers and minions. It so happened that his friend's three accusers had been respectively a poet, a statesman, and a rhetor; thus aptly typifying to the philosopher's lively imagination the triad of charlatans in whom public opinion found its appropriate representatives and spokesmen. Yet Plato ought consistently to have held that the condemnation of Socrates was, equally with the persecution of Pericles, a satire on the teaching which, after at least thirty years' exercise, had left its auditors more corrupt than it found them. In like manner the ostracism of Aristeides might be set against similar

sentences passed on less puritanical statesmen. For the purpose of the argument it would have been sufficient to show that in existing circumstances the office of public adviser was both thankless and dangerous. We must always remember that when Plato is speaking of past times he is profoundly influenced by aristocratic traditions, and also that under a retrospective disguise he is really attacking contemporary abuses. And if, even then, his denunciations seem excessive, their justification may be found in that continued decay of public virtue which, not long afterwards, brought about the final catastrophe of Athenian independence.

IV.

To illustrate the relation in which Plato stood towards his own times, we have already had occasion to draw largely on the productions of his maturer manhood. We have now to take up the broken thread of our systematic exposition, and to trace the development of his philosophy through that wonderful series of compositions which entitle him to rank among the greatest writers, the most comprehensive thinkers, and the purest religious teachers of all ages. In the presence of such glory a mere divergence of opinion must not be permitted to influence our judgment. High above all particular truths stands the principle that truth itself exists, and it was for this that Plato fought. If there were others more completely emancipated from superstition, none so persistently appealed to the logic before which superstition must ultimately vanish. If his schemes for the reconstruction of society ignore many obvious facts, they assert with unrivalled force the necessary supremacy of public welfare over private pleasure; and their avowed utilitarianism offers a common ground to the rival reformers who will have nothing to do with the mysticism of their metaphysical foundation. Those, again, who hold, like the youthful Plato himself, that the

ultimate interpretation of existence belongs to a science transcending human reason, will here find the doctrines of their religion anticipated as in a dream. And even those who, standing aloof both from theology and philosophy, live, as they imagine, for beauty alone, will observe with interest how the spirit of Greek art survived in the denunciation of its idolatry, and 'the light that never was on sea or land,' after fading away from the lower levels of Athenian fancy, came once more to suffuse the frozen steeps of dialectic with its latest and divinest rays.

The glowing enthusiasm of Plato is, however, not entirely derived from the poetic traditions of his native city; or perhaps we should rather say that he and the great writers who preceded him drew from a common fount of inspiration. Mr. Emerson, in one of the most penetrating criticisms ever written on our philosopher,[1] has pointed out the existence of two distinct elements in the Platonic Dialogues—one dispersive, practical, prosaic; the other mystical, absorbing, centripetal. The American scholar is, however, as we think, quite mistaken when he attributes the second of these tendencies to Asiatic influence. It is extremely doubtful whether Plato ever travelled farther east than Egypt; it is probable that his stay in that country was not of long duration; and it is certain that he did not acquire a single metaphysical idea from its inhabitants. He liked their rigid conservatism; he liked their institution of a dominant priesthood; he liked their system of popular education, and the place which it gave to mathematics made him look with shame on the 'swinish ignorance' of his own countrymen in that respect;[2] but on the whole he classes them among the races exclusively devoted to money-making, and in aptitude for philosophy he places them far below the Greeks. Very different were the impressions brought home from his visits to Sicily and

[1] The lecture on Plato in *Representative Men*.

[2] *Legg.* 819, D. Jowett, V., 390.

Southern Italy. There he became acquainted with modes of thought in which the search after hidden resemblances and analogies was a predominant passion; there the existence of a central unity underlying all phenomena was maintained, as against sense and common opinion, with the intensity of a religious creed; there alone speculation was clothed in poetic language; there first had an attempt been made to carry thought into life by associating it with a reform of manners and beliefs. There, too, the arts of dance and song had assumed a more orderly and solemn aspect; the chorus received its final constitution from a Sicilian master; and the loftiest strains of Greek lyric poetry were composed for recitation in the streets of Sicilian cities or at the courts of Sicilian kings. Then, with the rise of rhetoric, Greek prose was elaborated by Sicilian teachers into a sort of rhythmical composition, combining rich imagery with studied harmonies and contrasts of sense and sound. And as the hold of Asiatic civilisation on eastern Hellas grew weaker, the attention of her foremost spirits was more and more attracted to this new region of wonder and romance. The stream of colonisation set thither in a steady flow; the scenes of mythical adventure were rediscovered in Western waters; and it was imagined that, by grasping the resources of Sicily, an empire extending over the whole Mediterranean might be won. Perhaps, without being too fanciful, we may trace a likeness between the daring schemes of Alcibiades and the more remote but not more visionary kingdom suggested by an analogous inspiration to the idealising soul of Plato. Each had learned to practise, although for far different purposes, the royal art of Socrates—the mastery over men's minds acquired by a close study of their interests, passions, and beliefs. But the ambition of the one defeated his own aim, to the destruction of his country and of himself; while the other drew into Athenian thought whatever of Western force and fervour was needed for the accomplishment of its

imperial task. We may say of Plato what he has said of his own Theaetêtus, that 'he moves surely and smoothly and successfully in the path of knowledge and inquiry; always making progress like the noiseless flow of a river of oil';[1] but everywhere beside or beneath that placid lubricating flow we may trace the action of another current, where still sparkles, fresh and clear as at first, the fiery Sicilian wine.

It will be remembered that in an earlier section of this chapter we accompanied Plato to a period when he had provisionally adopted a theory in which the Protagorean contention that virtue can be taught was confirmed and explained by the Socratic contention that virtue is knowledge; while this knowledge again was interpreted in the sense of a hedonistic calculus, a prevision and comparison of the pleasures and pains consequent on our actions. We have now to trace the lines of thought by which he was guided to a different conception of ethical science.

After resolving virtue into knowledge of pleasure, the next questions which would present themselves to so keen a thinker were obviously, What is knowledge? and What is pleasure? The *Theaetêtus* is chiefly occupied with a discussion of the various answers already given to the first of these enquiries. It seems, therefore, to come naturally next after the *Protagoras*; and our conjecture receives a further confirmation when we find that here also a large place is given to the opinions of the Sophist after whom that dialogue is named; the chief difference being that the points selected for controversy are of a speculative rather than of a practical character. There is, however, a close connexion between the argument by which Protagoras had endeavoured to prove that all mankind are teachers of virtue, and his more general principle that man is the measure of all things. And perhaps it was the more obvious difficulties attending the latter view which led Plato, after some hesitation, to reject the former along

[1] *Theaet.*, 144. Jowett's Transl.

with it. In an earlier chapter we gave some reasons for believing that Protagoras did not erect every individual into an arbiter of truth in the sweeping sense afterwards put upon his words. He was probably opposing a human to a theological or a naturalistic standard. Nevertheless, it does not follow that Plato was fighting with a shadow when he pressed the Protagorean dictum to its most literal interpretation. There are plenty of people still who would maintain it to that extent. Wherever and whenever the authority of ancient traditions is broken down, the doctrine that one man's opinion is as good as another's immediately takes its place; or rather the doctrine in question is a survival of traditionalism in an extremely pulverised form. And when we are told that the majority must be right—which is a very different principle from holding that the majority should be obeyed—we may take it as a sign that the loose particles are beginning to coalesce again. The substitution of an individual for a universal standard of truth is, according to Plato, a direct consequence of the theory which identifies knowledge with sense-perception. It is, at any rate, certain that the most vehement assertors of the former doctrine are also those who are fondest of appealing to what they and their friends have seen, heard, or felt; and the more educated among them place enormous confidence in statistics. They are also fond of repeating the adage that an ounce of fact is worth a ton of theory, without considering that theory alone can furnish the balance in which facts are weighed. Plato does not go very deep into the *rationale* of observation, nor in the infancy of exact science was it to be expected that he should. He fully recognised the presence of two factors, an objective and a subjective, in every sensation, but lost his hold on the true method in attempting to trace a like dualism through the whole of consciousness. Where we should distinguish between the mental energies and the physical processes underlying them, or between the

elements respectively contributed to every cognition by immediate experience and reflection, he conceived the inner and outer worlds as two analogous series related to one another as an image to its original.

At this last point we touch on the final generalisation by which Plato extended the dialectic method to all existence, and readmitted into philosophy the earlier speculations provisionally excluded from it by Socrates. The cross-examining elenchus, at first applied only to individuals, had been turned with destructive effect on every class, every institution, and every polity, until the whole of human life was made to appear one mass of self-contradiction, instability, and illusion. It had been held by some that the order of nature offered a contrast and a correction to this bewildering chaos. Plato, on the other hand, sought to show that the ignorance and evil prevalent among men were only a part of the imperfection necessarily belonging to derivative existence of every kind. For this purpose the philosophy of Heracleitus proved a welcome auxiliary. The pupil of Socrates had been taught in early youth by Cratylus, an adherent of the Ephesian school, that movement, relativity, and the conjunction of opposites are the very conditions under which Nature works. We may conjecture that Plato did not at first detect any resemblance between the Heracleitean flux and the mental bewilderment produced or brought to light by the master of cross-examination. But his visit to Italy would probably enable him to take a new view of the Ionian speculations, by bringing him into contact with schools maintaining a directly opposite doctrine. The Eleatics held that existence remained eternally undivided, unmoved, and unchanged. The Pythagoreans arranged all things according to a strained and rigid antithetical construction. Then came the identifying flash.[1] Unchangeable reality, divine order,

[1] This expression is borrowed from Prof. Bain. See the chapter on Association by Resemblance in *The Senses and the Intellect*.

mathematical truth—these were the objective counterpart of the Socratic definitions, of the consistency which Socrates introduced into conduct. The Heracleitean system applied to phenomena only; and it faithfully reflected the incoherent beliefs and disorderly actions of uneducated men. We are brought into relation with the fluctuating sea of generated and perishing natures by sense and opinion, and these reproduce, in their irreconcilable diversity, the shifting character of the objects with which they are conversant. Whatever we see and feel is a mixture of being and unreality; it is, and is not, at the same time. Sensible magnitudes are equal or greater or less according as the standard of comparison is chosen. Yet the very act of comparison shows that there is something in ourselves deeper than mere sense; something to which all individual sensations are referred as to a common centre, and in which their images are stored up. Knowledge, then, can no longer be identified with sensation, since the mental reproductions of external objects are apprehended in the absence of their originals, and since thought possesses the further faculty of framing abstract notions not representing any sensible objects at all.

We need not follow Plato's investigations into the meaning of knowledge and the causes of illusion any further; especially as they do not lead, in this instance, to any positive conclusion. The general tendency is to seek for truth within rather than without; and to connect error partly with the disturbing influence of sense-impressions on the higher mental faculties, partly with the inherent confusion and instability of the phenomena whence those impressions are derived. Our principal concern here is to note the expansive power of generalisation which was carrying philosophy back again from man to Nature—the deep-seated contempt of Plato for public opinion—and the incipient differentiation of demonstrated from empirical truth.

A somewhat similar vein of reflection is worked out in the

Cratylus, a Dialogue presenting some important points of contact with the *Theaetêtus*, and probably belonging to the same period. There is the same constant reference to Heracleitus, whose philosophy is here also treated as in great measure, but not entirely, true ; and the opposing system of Parmenides is again mentioned, though much more briefly, as a valuable set-off against its extravagances. The *Cratylus* deals exclusively with language, just as the *Theaetêtus* had dealt with sensation and mental imagery, but in such a playful and ironical tone that its speculative importance is likely to be overlooked. Some of the Greek philosophers seem to have thought that the study of things might advantageously be replaced by the study of words, which were supposed to have a natural and necessary connexion with their accepted meanings. This view was particularly favoured by the Heracleiteans, who found, or fancied that they found, a confirmation of their master's teaching in etymology. Plato professes to adopt the theory in question, and supports it with a number of derivations which to us seem ludicrously absurd, but which may possibly have been transcribed from the pages of contemporary philologists. At last, however, he turns round and shows that other verbal arguments, equally good, might be adduced on behalf of Parmenides. But the most valuable part of the discussion is a protest against the whole theory that things can be studied through their names. Plato justly observes that an image, to be perfect, should not reproduce its original, but only certain aspects of it ; that the framers of language were not infallible ; and that we are just as competent to discover the nature of things as they could be. One can imagine the delight with which he would have welcomed the modern discovery that sensations, too, are a language ; and that the associated groups into which they most readily gather are determined less by the necessary connexions of things in themselves than by the exigencies of self-preservation and reproduction in sentient beings.

Through all his criticisms on the popular sources of information—sense, language and public opinion—Plato refers to an ideal of perfect knowledge which he assumes without being able to define it. It must satisfy the negative condition of being free from self-contradiction, but further than this we cannot go. Yet, in the hands of a metaphysician, no more than this was required to reconstruct the world. The demand for consistency explains the practical philosophy of Socrates. It also explains, under another form, the philosophy, both practical and speculative, of his disciple. Identity and the correlative of identity, difference, gradually came to cover with their manifold combinations all knowledge, all life, and all existence.

It was from mathematical science that the light of certainty first broke. Socrates had not encouraged the study of mathematics, either pure or applied ; nor, if we may judge from some disparaging allusions to Hippias and his lectures in the *Protagoras*, did Plato at first regard it with any particular favour. He may have acquired some notions of arithmetic and geometry at school ; but the intimate acquaintance with, and deep interest in them, manifested throughout his later works, probably dates from his visits to Italy, Sicily, Cyrênê, and Egypt. In each of these places the exact sciences were cultivated with more assiduity than at Athens ; in southern Italy they had been brought into close connexion with philosophy by a system of mystical interpretation. The glory of discovering their true speculative significance was reserved for Plato. Just as he had detected a profound analogy between the Socratic scepticism and the Heracleitean flux, so also, by another vivid intuition, he saw in the definitions and demonstrations of geometry a type of true reasoning, a particular application of the Socratic logic. Thus the two studies were brought into fruitful reaction, the one gaining a wider applicability, and the other an exacter method of proof. The mathematical spirit ultimately proved

too strong for Plato, and petrified his philosophy into a lifeless formalism; but no extraneous influence helped so much to bring about the complete maturity of his constructive powers, in no direction has he more profoundly influenced the thought of later ages.

Both the *Theaetêtus* and the *Cratylus* contain allusions to mathematical reasoning, but its full significance is first exhibited in the *Meno*. Here the old question, whether virtue can be taught, is again raised, to be discussed from an entirely new point of view, and resolved into the more general question, Can anything be taught? The answer is, Yes and No. You may stimulate the native activity of the intellect, but you cannot create it. Take a totally uneducated man, and, under proper guidance, he shall discover the truths of geometry for himself, by virtue of their self-evident clearness. Being independent of any traceable experience, the elementary principles of this science, of all science, must have been acquired in some antenatal period, or rather they were never acquired at all, they belong to the very nature of the soul herself. The doctrine here unfolded had a great future before it; and it has never, perhaps, been discussed with so much eagerness as during the last half-century among ourselves. The masters of English thought have placed the issue first raised by Plato in the very front of philosophical controversy; and the general public have been brought to feel that their dearest interests hang on its decision. The subject has, however, lost much of its adventitious interest to those who know that the *à priori* position was turned, a hundred years ago, by Kant. The philosopher of Königsberg showed that, granting knowledge to be composed of two elements, mind adds nothing to outward experience but its own forms, the system of connexions according to which it groups phenomena. Deprive these forms of the content given to them by feeling, and the soul will be left beating her wings in a vacuum. The doctrine that knowledge is not a

dead deposit in consciousness or memory, but a living energy whereby phenomena are, to use Kant's words, gathered up into the synthetic unity of apperception, has since found a physiological basis in the theory of central innervation. And the experiential school of psychology have simultaneously come to recognise the existence of fixed conditions under which consciousness works and grows, and which, in the last analysis, resolve themselves into the apprehension of resemblance, difference, coexistence, and succession. The most complex cognition involves no more than these four categories ; and it is probable that they all co-operate in the most elementary perception.

The truths here touched on seem to have been dimly present to the mind of Plato. He never doubts that all knowledge must, in some way or other, be derived from experience ; and, accordingly, he assumes that what cannot have been learned in this world was learned in another. But he does not (in the *Meno* at least) suppose that the process ever had a beginning. It would seem that he is trying to express in figurative language the distinction, lost almost as soon as found, between intelligence and the facts on which intelligence is exercised. An examination of the steps by which Meno's slave is brought to perceive, without being directly told, the truth of the Pythagorean theorem, will show that his share in the demonstration is limited to the intuition of certain numerical equalities and inequalities. Now, to Plato, the perception of sameness and difference meant everything. He would have denied that the sensible world presented examples of these relations in their ideal absoluteness and purity. In tracing back their apprehension to the self-reflection of the soul, the consciousness of personal identity, he would not have transgressed the limits of a legitimate enquiry. But self-consciousness involved a possible abstraction from disturbing influences, which he interpreted as a real separation between mind and matter ; and, to make it more complete, an inde-

pendent pre-existence of the former. Nor was this all. Since knowledge is of likeness in difference, then the central truth of things, the reality underlying all appearance, must be an abiding identity recognised by the soul through her previous communion with it in a purer world. The inevitable tendency of two identities, one subjective and the other objective, was to coalesce in an absolute unity where all distinctions of time and space would have disappeared, carrying the whole mythical machinery along with them; and Plato's logic is always hovering on the verge of such a consummation without being able fully to accept it. Still, the mystical tendency, which it was reserved for Plotinus to carry out in its entirety, is always present, though restrained by other motives, working for the ascertainment of uniformity in theory and for the enforcement of uniformity in practice.

We have accompanied Plato to a point where he begins to see his way towards a radical reconstruction of all existing beliefs and institutions. In the next chapter we shall attempt to show how far he succeeded in this great purpose, how much, in his positive contributions to thought is of permanent, and how much of merely biographical or literary value.

CHAPTER V.

PLATO AS A REFORMER.

I.

In the last chapter we considered the philosophy of Plato chiefly under its critical and negative aspects. We saw how it was exclusively from that side that he at first apprehended and enlarged the dialectic of Socrates, how deeply his scepticism was coloured by the religious reaction of the age, and how he attempted, out of his master's mouth, to overturn the positive teaching of the master himself. We saw how, in the *Protagoras*, he sketched a theory of ethics, which was no sooner completed than it became the starting-point of a still more extended and arduous enquiry. We followed the widening horizon of his speculations until they embraced the whole contemporary life of Hellas, and involved it in a common condemnation as either hopelessly corrupt, or containing within itself the seeds of corruption. We then saw how, by a farther generalisation, he was led to look for the sources of error in the laws of man's sensuous nature and of the phenomenal world with which it holds communion ; how, moreover, under the guidance of suggestions coming both from within and from without, he reverted to the earlier schools of Greek thought, and brought their results into parallelism with the main lines of Socratic dialectic. And finally, we watched him planting a firm foothold on the basis of mathematical demonstration ; seeking in the very constitution of the soul itself for a derivation of the truths which sensuous experience could not impart, and winning back from

a more profoundly reasoned religion the hope, the self-confidence, the assurance of perfect knowledge, which had been formerly surrendered in deference to the demands of a merely external and traditional faith. That God alone is wise, and by consequence alone good, might still remain a fixed principle with Plato; but it ceased to operate as a restraint on human aspiration when he had come to recognise an essential unity among all forms of conscious life, which, though it might be clouded and forgotten, could never be entirely effaced. And when Plato tells us, at the close of his career, that God, far more than any individual man, is the measure of all things,[1] who can doubt that he had already learned to identify the human and divine essences in the common notion of a universal soul?

The germ of this new dogmatism was present in Plato's mind from the very beginning, and was partly an inheritance ftom older forms of thought. The *Apologia* had reproduced one important feature in the positive teaching of Socrates—the distinction between soul and body, and the necessity of attending to the former rather than to the latter: and this had now acquired such significance as to leave no standing-room for the agnosticism with which it had been incompatible from the first. The same irresistible force of expansion which had brought the human soul into communion with absolute truth, was to be equally verified in a different direction. Plato was too much interested in practical questions to be diverted from them long by any theoretical philosophy; or, perhaps, we should rather say that this interest had accompanied and inspired him throughout. It is from the essential relativity of mind, the profound craving for intellectual sympathy with other minds, that all mystical imaginations and super-subtle abstractions take rise; so that, when the strain of transcendent absorption and ecstasy is relaxed under the chilling but beneficent contact of earthly experience, they become

[1] *Legg.* 716, C.

condensed into ideas for the reconstitution of life and society on a basis of reciprocity, of self-restraint, and of self-devotion to a commonwealth greater and more enduring than any individual, while, at the same time, presenting to each in objective form the principle by virtue of which only, instead of being divided, he can become reconciled with himself. Here we have the creed of all philosophy, whether theological, metaphysical, or positive, that there is, or that there should be, this threefold unity of feeling, of action, and of thought, of the soul, of society, and of universal existence, to win which is everlasting life, while to be without it is everlasting death. This creed must be re-stated and re-interpreted at every revolution of thought. We have to see how it was, for the first time, stated and interpreted by Plato.

The principal object of Plato's negative criticism had been to emphasise the distinction between reality and appearance in the world without, between sense, or imagination, and reason in the human soul. True to the mediatorial spirit of Greek thought, his object now was to bridge over the seemingly impassable gulf. We must not be understood to say that these two distinct, and to some extent contrasted, tendencies correspond to two definitely divided periods of his life. It is evident that the tasks of dissection and reconstruction were often carried on conjointly, and represented two aspects of an indivisible process. But on the whole there is good reason to believe that Plato, like other men, was more inclined to pull to pieces in his youth and to build up in his later days. We are, therefore, disposed to agree with those critics who assign both the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* to a comparatively advanced stage of Platonic speculation. It is less easy to decide which of the two was composed first, for there seems to be a greater maturity of thought in the one and of style in the other. For our purposes it will be most convenient to consider them together.

We have seen how Plato came to look on mathematics as

an introduction to absolute knowledge. He now discovered a parallel method of approach towards perfect wisdom in an order of experience which to most persons might seem as far as possible removed from exact science—in those passionate feelings which were excited in the Greek imagination by the spectacle of youthful beauty, without distinction of sex. There was, at least among the Athenians, a strong intellectual element in the attachments arising out of such feelings; and the strange anomaly might often be seen of a man devoting himself to the education of a youth whom he was, in other respects, doing his utmost to corrupt. Again, the beauty by which a Greek felt most fascinated came nearer to a visible embodiment of mind than any that has ever been known, and as such could be associated with the purest philosophical aspirations. And, finally, the passion of love in its normal manifestations is an essentially generic instinct, being that which carries an individual most entirely out of himself, making him instrumental to the preservation of the race in forms of ever-increasing comeliness and vigour; so that, given a wise training and a wide experience, the maintenance of a noble breed may safely be entrusted to its infallible selection.[1] All these points of view have been developed by Plato with such copiousness of illustration and splendour of language that his name is still associated in popular fancy with an ideal of exalted and purified desire.

So far, however, we only stand on the threshold of Platonic love. The earthly passion, being itself a kind of generalisation, is our first step in the ascent to that highest stage of existence where wisdom and virtue and happiness are one—the good to which all other goods are related as means to an end. But love is not only an introduction to philosophy, it is a type of philosophy itself. Both are conditions intermediate between vacuity and fulfilment; desire being by its very nature dis-

[1] See the chapter on the Metaphysics of Sexual Love in Schopenhauer's *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*.

satisfied, and vanishing at the instant that its object is attained. The philosopher is a lover of wisdom, and therefore not wise; and yet not wholly ignorant, for he knows that he knows nothing. Thus we seem to be thrown back on the standpoint of Plato's earliest agnosticism. Nevertheless, if the *Symposium* agrees nominally with the *Apologia*, in reality it marks a much more advanced point of speculation. The idea of what knowledge is has begun to assume a much clearer expression. We gather from various hints and suggestions that it is the perception of likeness; the very process of ascending generalisation typified by intellectual love.

It is worthy of remark that in the Platonic Erôs we have the germ—or something more than the germ—of Aristotle's whole metaphysical system.[1] According to the usual law of speculative evolution, what was subjective in the one becomes objective in the other. With Plato the passion for knowledge had been merely the guiding principle of a few chosen spirits. With Aristotle it is the living soul of Nature, the secret spring of movement, from the revolution of the outermost starry sphere to the decomposition and recomposition of our mutable terrestrial elements; and from these again through the whole scale of organic life, up to the moral culture of man and the search for an ideally-constituted state. What enables all these myriad movements to continue through eternity, returning ever in an unbroken circle on themselves, is the yearning of unformed matter—that is to say, of unrealised power—towards the absolute unchanging actuality, the self-thinking thought, unmoved, but moving every other form of existence by the desire to participate in its ineffable perfection. Born of the Hellenic enthusiasm for beauty, this wonderful conception subsequently became incorporated with the official teaching of Catholic theology. What had once been a theme

[1] Cf. for the whole following passage Havet, *Le Christianisme et ses Origines*, I., 286-8. It was, however, written before the author had become acquainted with M. Havet's work.

for ribald merriment or for rhetorical ostentation among the golden youth of Athens, furnished the motive for his most transcendent meditations to the Angel of the Schools ; but the fire which lurked under the dusty abstractions of Aquinas needed the touch of a poet and a lover before it could be rekindled into flame. The eyes of Beatrice completed what the dialectic of Plato had begun ; and the hundred cantos of her adorer found their fitting close in the love that moves the sun and the other stars.

We must, however, observe that, underlying all these poetical imaginations, there is a deeper and wider law of human nature to which they unconsciously bear witness—the intimate connexion of religious mysticism with the passion of love. By this we do not mean the constant interference of the one with the other, whether for the purpose of stimulation, as with the naturalistic religions, or for the purpose of restraint, as with the ethical religions ; but we mean that they seem to divide between them a common fund of nervous energy, so that sometimes their manifestations are inextricably confounded, as in certain debased forms of modern Christianity ; sometimes they utterly exclude one another ; and sometimes, which is the most frequent case of any, the one is transformed into the other, their substantial identity and continuity being indicated very frankly by their use of the same language, the same ritual, and the same aesthetic decoration. And this will show how the decay of religious belief may be accompanied by an outbreak of moral licence, without our being obliged to draw the inference that passion can only be held in check by irrational beliefs, or by organisations whose supremacy is fatal to industrial, political, and intellectual progress. For, if our view of the case be correct, the passion was not really restrained, but only turned in a different direction, and frequently nourished into hysterical excess ; so that, with the inevitable decay of theology, it returns to its old haunts, bringing with it seven devils worse than the first. After the

Crusades came the Courts of Love; after the Dominican and Franciscan movements, the Renaissance; after Puritanism, the Restoration; after Jesuitism, the Regency. Nor is this all. The passion of which we are speaking, when abnormally developed and unbalanced by severe intellectual exercise, is habitually accompanied by delirious jealousy, by cruelty, and by deceit. On taking the form of religion, the influence of its evil associates immediately becomes manifest in the suppression of alien creeds, in the tortures inflicted on their adherents, and in the maxim that no faith need be kept with a heretic. Persecution has been excused on the ground that any means were justifiable for the purpose of saving souls from eternal torment. But how came it to be believed that such a consequence was involved in a mere error of judgment? The faith did not create the intolerance, but the intolerance created the faith, and so gave an idealised expression to the jealous fury accompanying a passion which no spiritual alchemy can purify from its original affinities. It is not by turning this most terrible instinct towards a supernatural object that we should combat it, but by developing the active and masculine in preference to the emotional and feminine side of our nervous organisation.[1]

In addition to its other great lessons, the *Symposium* has afforded Plato an opportunity for contrasting his own method of philosophising with pre-Socratic modes of thought. For it consists of a series of discourses in praise of love, so arranged as to typify the manner in which Greek speculation, after beginning with mythology, subsequently advanced to physical theories of phenomena, then passed from the historical to the contemporary method, asking, not whence did things come, but what are they in themselves; and finally arrived at the logical standpoint of analysis, classification, and induction.

[1] In order to avoid misconception it may be as well to mention that the above remarks apply only to mystical passion assuming the form of religion; they have nothing to do with intellectual and moral convictions.

The nature of dialectic is still further elucidated in the *Phaedrus,* where it is also contrasted with the method, or rather the no-method, of popular rhetoric. Here, again, discussions about love are chosen as an illustration. A discourse on the subject by no less a writer than Lysias is quoted and shown to be deficient in the most elementary requisites of logical exposition. The different arguments are strung together without any principle of arrangement, and ambiguous terms are used without being defined. In insisting on the necessity of definition, Plato followed Socrates ; but he defines according to a totally different method. Socrates had arrived at his general notions partly by a comparison of particular instances with a view to eliciting the points where they agreed, partly by amending the conceptions already in circulation. We have seen that the earliest Dialogues attributed to Plato are one long exposure of the difficulties attending such a procedure ; and his subsequent investigations all went to prove that nothing solid could be built on such shifting foundations as sense and opinion. Meanwhile increasing familiarity with the great ontological systems had taught him to begin with the most general notions, and to work down from them to the most particular. The consequence was that dialectic came to mean nothing but classification or logical division. Definition was absorbed into this process, and reasoning by syllogism was not yet differentiated from it. To tell what a thing was, meant to fix its place in the universal order of existence, and its individual existence was sufficiently accounted for by the same determination. If we imagine first a series of concentric circles, then a series of contrasts symmetrically disposed on either side of a central dividing line, and finally a series of transitions descending from the most absolute unity to the most irregular diversity—we shall, by combining the three schemes, arrive at some understanding of the Platonic dialectic. To assign anything its place in these various sequences was at once to define it and to demonstrate the necessity of

its existence. The arrangement is also equivalent to a theory of final causes; for everything has a function to perform, marked out by its position, and bringing it into relation with the universal order. Such a system would inevitably lead to the denial of evil, were not evil itself interpreted as the necessary correlative of good, or as a necessary link in the descending manifestations of reality. Moreover, by virtue of his identifying principle, Plato saw in the lowest forms a shadow or reflection of the highest. Hence the many surprises, concessions, and returns to abandoned positions which we find in his later writings. The three moments of Greek thought, circumscription, antithesis, and mediation, work in such close union, or with such bewildering rapidity of alternation, through all his dialectic, that we are never sure whither he is leading us, and not always sure that he knows it himself.

In the opening chapter of this work we endeavoured to explain how the Pythagorean philosophy arose out of the intoxicated delight inspired by a first acquaintance with the manifold properties of number and figure. If we would enter into the spirit of Platonism, we must similarly throw ourselves back into the time when the idea of a universal classification first dawned on men's minds. We must remember how it gratified the Greek love of order combined with individuality; what unbounded opportunities for asking and answering questions it supplied; and what promises of practical regeneration it held out. Not without a shade of sadness for so many baffled efforts and so many blighted hopes, yet also with a grateful recollection of all that reason has accomplished, and with something of his own high intellectual enthusiasm, shall we listen to Plato's prophetic words—words of deeper import than their own author knew—'If I find any man who is able to see a One and Many in Nature, him I follow and walk in his steps as if he were a god.'[1]

[1] *Phaedr.*, 266, B. Jowett, II., 144. According to Teichmüller (*Literarische Fehden im vierten Jahrhundert vor Chr.*, p. 135)—the god here spoken of is no

It is interesting to see how the most comprehensive systems of the present century, even when most opposed to the metaphysical spirit, are still constructed on the plan long ago sketched by Plato. Alike in his classification of the sciences, in his historical deductions, and in his plans for the reorganisation of society, Auguste Comte adopts a scheme of ascending or descending generality. The conception of differentiation and integration employed both by Hegel and by Mr. Herbert Spencer is also of Platonic origin ; only, what with the ancient thinker was a statical law of order has become with his modern successors a dynamic law of progress ; while, again, there is this distinction between the German and the English philosopher, that the former construes as successive moments of the Idea what the latter regards as simultaneous and interdependent processes of evolution.

II.

The study of psychology with Plato stands in a fourfold relation to his general theory of the world. The dialectic method, without which Nature would remain unintelligible, is a function of the soul, and constitutes its most essential activity ; then soul, as distinguished from body, represents the higher, supersensual element of existence ; thirdly, the objective dualism of reality and appearance is reproduced in the subjective dualism of reason and sense ; and lastly, soul, as the original spring of movement, mediates between the eternal entities which are unmoved and the material phenomena which are subject to a continual flux. It is very characteristic of Plato that he first strains an antithesis to the utmost and then endeavours to reconcile its extremes by the interposition of one or more intermediate links. So, while assigning this office to soul as a part of the universe, he

other than Plato himself. Even granting the pantheistic interpretation of Platonism to be true, this seems a somewhat strained application of it.

classifies the psychic functions themselves according to a similar principle. On the intellectual side he places true opinion, or what we should now call empirical knowledge, midway between demonstration and sense-perception. Such at least seems to be the result reached in the *Theaetêtus* and the *Meno*. In the *Republic* a further analysis leads to a somewhat different arrangement. Opinion is placed between knowledge and ignorance; while the possible objects to which it corresponds form a transition from being to not-being. Subsequently mathematical reasoning is distinguished from the higher science which takes cognisance of first principles, and thus serves to connect it with simple opinion; while this again, dealing as it does with material objects, is related to the knowledge of their shadows as the most perfect science is related to mathematics.[1]

Turning from dialectic to ethics, Plato in like manner feels the need of interposing a mediator between reason and appetite. The quality chosen for this purpose he calls *θυμός*, a term which does not, as has been erroneously supposed, correspond to our word Will, but rather to pride, or the feeling of personal honour. It is both the seat of military courage and the natural auxiliary of reason, with which it co-operates in restraining the animal desires. It is a characteristic difference between Socrates and Plato that the former should have habitually reinforced his arguments for virtue by appeals to self-interest; while the latter, with his aristocratic way of looking at things, prefers to enlist the aid of a haughtier feeling on their behalf. Aristotle followed in the same track when he taught that to be overcome by anger is less discreditable than to be overcome by desire. In reality none of the instincts tending to self-preservation is more praiseworthy than another, or more amenable to the control of reason. Plato's tripartite division of mind cannot be made

[1] Adapting Plato's formula to modern ideas we might say: A literary education : knowledge of the world : : mathematics : physical science.

to fit into the classifications of modern psychology, which are adapted not only to a more advanced state of knowledge but also to more complex conditions of life. But the characters of women, by their greater simplicity and uniformity, show to some extent what those of men may once have been ; and it will, perhaps, confirm the analysis of the *Phaedrus* to recall the fact that personal pride is still associated with moral principle in the guardianship of female virtue.

If the soul served to connect the eternal realities with the fleeting appearances by which they were at once darkened, relieved, and shadowed forth, it was also a bond of union between the speculative and the practical philosophy of Plato ; and in discussing his psychology we have already passed from the one to the other. The transition will become still easier if we remember that the question, 'What is knowledge?' was, according to our view, originally suggested by a theory reducing ethical science to a hedonistic calculus, and that along with it would arise another question, 'What is pleasure?' This latter enquiry, though incidentally touched on elsewhere, is not fully dealt with in any Dialogue except the *Philêbus*, which we agree with Prof. Jowett in referring to a very late period of Platonic authorship. But the line of argument which it pursues had probably been long familiar to our philosopher. At any rate, the *Phaedo*, the *Republic*, and perhaps the *Gorgias*, assume, as already proved, that pleasure is not the highest good. The question is one on which thinkers are still divided. It seems, indeed, to lie outside the range of reason, and the disputants are accordingly obliged to invoke the authority either of individual consciousness or of common consent on behalf of their respective opinions. We have, however, got so far beyond the ancients that the doctrine of egoistic hedonism has been abandoned by almost everybody. The substitution of another's pleasure for our own as the object of pursuit was not a conception which presented itself to any Greek moralist,

although the principle of self-sacrifice was maintained by some of them, and especially by Plato, to its fullest extent. Pleasure-seeking being inseparably associated with selfishness, the latter was best attacked through the former, and if Plato's logic does not commend itself to our understanding, we must admit that it was employed in defence of a noble cause.

The style of polemics adopted on this occasion, whatever else may be its value, will serve excellently to illustrate the general dialectic method of attack. When Plato particularly disliked a class of persons, or an institution, or an art, or a theory, or a state of consciousness, he tried to prove that it was confused, unstable, and self-contradictory; besides taking full advantage of any discredit popularly attached to it. All these objections are brought to bear with full force against pleasure. Some pleasures are delusive, since the reality of them falls far short of the anticipation; all pleasure is essentially transitory, a perpetual becoming, never a fixed state, and therefore not an end of action; pleasures which ensue on the satisfaction of desires are necessarily accompanied by pains and disappear simultaneously with them; the most intense, and for that reason the most typical, pleasures, are associated with feelings of shame, and their enjoyment is carefully hidden out of sight.

Such arguments have almost the air of an afterthought, and Plato was perhaps more powerfully swayed by other considerations, which we shall now proceed to analyse. When pleasure was assumed to be the highest good, knowledge was agreed to be the indispensable means for its attainment; and, as so often happens, the means gradually substituted itself for the end. Nor was this all; for knowledge (or reason) being not only the means but the supreme arbiter, when called on to adjudicate between conflicting claims, would naturally pronounce in its own favour. Naturally, also, a moralist who made science the chief interest of his own life would come to believe that it was the proper object of all

life, whether attended or not by any pleasurable emotion. And so, in direct opposition to the utilitarian theory, Plato declares at last that to brave a lesser pain in order to escape from a greater, or to renounce a lesser pleasure in order to secure a greater, is cowardice and intemperance in disguise; and that wisdom, which he had formerly regarded as a means to other ends, is the one end for which everything else should be exchanged.[1] Perhaps it may have strengthened him in this attitude to observe that the many, whose opinion he so thoroughly despised, made pleasure their aim in life, while the fastidious few preferred knowledge. Yet, after a time, even the latter alternative failed to satisfy his restless spirit. For the conception of knowledge resolved itself into the deeper conceptions of a knowing subject and a known object, the soul and the universe, each of which became in turn the supreme ideal. What interpretation should be given to virtue depended on the choice between them. According to the one view it was a purification of the higher principle within us from material wants and passions. Sensual gratifications should be avoided, because they tend to degrade and pollute the soul. Death should be fearlessly encountered, because it will release her from the restrictions of bodily existence. But Plato had too strong a grasp on the realities of life to remain satisfied with a purely ascetic morality. Knowledge, on the objective side, brought him into relation with an organised universe where each individual existed, not for his own sake but for the sake of the whole, to fulfil a definite function in the system of which he formed a part. And if from one point of view the soul herself was an absolutely simple indivisible substance, from another point of view she reflected the external order, and only fulfilled the law of her being when each separate faculty was exercised within its appropriate sphere.

There still remained one last problem to solve, one point

[1] *Phaedo*, 69, A. Jowett, I., 442.

where the converging streams of ethical and metaphysical speculation met and mixed. Granted that knowledge is the soul's highest energy, what is the object of this beatific vision? Granted that all particular energies co-operate for a common purpose, what is the end to which they are subordinated? Granted that dialectic leads us up through ascending gradations to one all-comprehensive idea, how is that idea to be defined? Plato only attempts to answer this last question by re-stating it under the form of an illustration. As the sun at once gives life to all Nature, and light to the eye by which Nature is perceived, so also the idea of Good is the cause of existence and of knowledge alike, but transcends them both as an absolute unity, of which we cannot even say that it is, for the distinction of subject and predicate would bring back relativity and plurality again. Here we seem to have the Socratic paradox reversed. Socrates identified virtue with knowledge, but, at the same time, entirely emptied the latter of its speculative content. Plato, inheriting the idea of knowledge in its artificially restricted significance, was irresistibly drawn back to the older philosophy whence it had been originally borrowed; then, just as his master had given an ethical application to science, so did he, travelling over the same ground in an opposite direction, extend the theory of ethics far beyond its legitimate range, until a principle which seemed to have no meaning, except in reference to human conduct, became the abstract bond of union between all reality and all thought.

Whether Plato ever succeeded in making the idea of Good quite clear to others, or even to himself, is more than we can tell. In the *Republic* he declines giving further explanations on the ground that his pupils have not passed through the necessary mathematical initiation. Whether quantitative reasoning was to furnish the form or the matter of transcendent dialectic is left undetermined. We are told that on one occasion a large audience assembled to hear Plato lecture on

the Good, but that, much to their disappointment, the discourse was entirely filled with geometrical and astronomical investigations. Bearing in mind, however, that mathematical science deals chiefly with equations, and that astronomy, according to Plato, had for its object to prove the absolute uniformity of the celestial motions, we may perhaps conclude that the idea of Good meant no more than the abstract notion of identity or indistinguishable likeness. The more complex idea of law as a uniformity of relations, whether coexistent or successive, had not then dawned, but it has since been similarly employed to bring physics into harmony with ethics and logic.

III.

So far we have followed the evolution of Plato's philosophy as it may have been effected under the impulse of purely theoretical motives. We have now to consider what form was imposed on it by the more imperious exigencies of practical experience. Here, again, we find Plato taking up and continuing the work of Socrates, but on a vastly greater scale. There was, indeed, a kind of pre-established harmony between the expression of thought on the one hand and the increasing need for its application to life on the other. For the spread of public corruption had gone on *pari passu* with the development of philosophy. The teaching of Socrates was addressed to individuals, and dealt chiefly with private morality. On other points he was content to accept the law of the land and the established political constitution as sufficiently safe guides. He was not accustomed to see them defied or perverted into instruments of selfish aggrandisement; nor, apparently, had the possibility of such a contingency occurred to him. Still less did he imagine that all social institutions then existing were radically wrong. Hence the personal virtues held a more important place in his system than the social virtues. His attacks were directed

against slothfulness and self-indulgence, against the ignorant temerity which hurried some young men into politics before their education was finished, and the timidity or fastidiousness which prevented others from discharging the highest duties of citizenship. Nor, in accepting the popular religion of his time, had he any suspicion that its sanctions might be invoked on behalf of successful violence and fraud. We have already shown how differently Plato felt towards his age, and how much deeper as well as more shameless was the demoralisation with which he set himself to contend. It must also be remembered how judicial proceedings had come to overshadow every other public interest; and how the highest culture of the time had, at least in his eyes, become identified with the systematic perversion of truth and right. These considerations will explain why Greek philosophy, while moving on a higher plane, passed through the same orbit which had been previously described by Greek poetry. Precisely as the lessons of moderation in Homer had been followed by the lessons of justice in Aeschylus, precisely as the religion which was a selfish traffic between gods and men, and had little to tell of a life beyond the grave, was replaced by the nobler faith in a divine guardianship of morality and a retributive judgment after death—so also did the Socratic ethics and the Socratic theology lead to a system which made justice the essence of morality and religion its everlasting consecration.

Temperance and justice are very clearly distinguished in our minds. The one is mainly a self-regarding, the other mainly a social virtue. But it would be a mistake to suppose that the distinction was equally clear to Plato. He had learned from Socrates that all virtue is one. He found himself confronted by men who pointedly opposed interest to honour and expediency to fair-dealing, without making any secret of their preference for the former. Here, as elsewhere, he laboured to dissolve away the vulgar antithesis and to

substitute for it a deeper one—the antithesis between real and apparent goods. He was quite ready to imagine the case of a man who might have to incur all sorts of suffering in the practice of justice even to the extent of infamy, torture, and death ; but without denying that these were evils, he held that to practise injustice with the accompaniment of worldly prosperity was a greater evil still. And this conviction is quite unconnected with his belief in a future life. He would not have agreed with St. Paul that virtue is a bad calculation without the hope of a reward for it hereafter. His morality is absolutely independent of any extrinsic considerations. Nevertheless, he holds that in our own interest we should do what is right; and it never seems to have entered his thoughts that there could be any other motive for doing it We have to explain how such a paradox was possible.

Plato seems to have felt very strongly that all virtuous action tends towards a good exceeding in value any temporary sacrifice which it may involve; and the accepted connotation of ethical terms went entirely along with this belief. But he could not see that a particular action might be good for the community at large and bad for the individual who performed it, not in a different sense but in the very same sense, as involving a diminution of his happiness. For from Plato's abstract and generalising point of view all good was homogeneous, and the welfare of the individual was absolutely identified with the welfare of the whole to which he belonged. As against those who made right dependent on might and erected self-indulgence into the law of life Plato occupied an impregnable position. He showed that such principles made society impossible, and that without honour even a gang of thieves cannot hold together.[1] He also saw that it is reason which brings each individual into relation with the whole and enables him to understand his obligations towards it ; but at the same time he gave this

[1] *Repub.*, I., 348, B ff. ; Zeller, *op. cit.*, 507–8.

reason a personal character which does not properly belong to it ; or, what comes to the same thing, he treated human beings as pure *entia rationis*, thus unwittingly removing the necessity for having any morality at all. On his assumption it would be absurd to break the law ; but neither would there be any temptation to break it, nor would any unpleasant consequences follow on its violation. Plato speaks of injustice as an injury to the soul's health, and therefore as the greatest evil that can befall a human being, without observing that the inference involves a confusion of terms. For his argument requires that soul should mean both the whole of conscious life and the system of abstract notions through which we communicate and co-operate with our fellow-creatures. All crime is a serious disturbance to the latter, for it cannot without absurdity be made the foundation of a general rule ; but, apart from penal consequences, it does not impair, and may benefit the former.

While Plato identified the individual with the community by slurring over the possible divergence of their interests, he still further contributed to their logical confusion by resolving the ego into a multitude of conflicting faculties and impulses supposed to represent the different classes of which a State is made up. His opponents held that justice and law emanate from the ruling power in the body politic ; and they were brought to admit that supreme power is properly vested in the wisest and best citizens. Transferring these principles to the inner forum, he maintained that a psychological aristocracy could only be established by giving reason a similar control over the animal passions.[1] At first sight, this seemed to imply no more than a return to the standpoint of Socrates, or of Plato himself in the *Protagoras*. The man who indulges his desires within the limits prescribed by a regard for their safe satisfaction through his whole life, may be called temperate and reasonable, but he is not necessarily just. If, how-

[1] See especially the argument with Callicles in the *Gorgias*.

ever, we identify the paramount authority within with the paramount authority without, we shall have to admit that there is a faculty of justice in the individual soul corresponding to the objective justice of political law; and since the supreme virtue is agreed on all hands to be reason, we must go a step further and admit that justice is reason, or that it is reasonable to be just; and that by consequence the height of injustice is the height of folly. Moreover, this fallacious substitution of justice for temperance was facilitated by the circumstance that although the former virtue is not involved in the latter, the latter is to a very great extent involved in the former. Self-control by no means carries with it a respect for the rights of others; but where such respect exists it necessitates a considerable amount of self-control.

We trust that the steps of a difficult argument have been made clear by the foregoing analysis; and that the whole process has been shown to hinge on the ambiguous use of such notions as the individual and the community, of which the one is paradoxically construed as a plurality and the other as a unity; justice, which is alternately taken in the sense of control exercised by the worthiest, control of passion in the general interest, control of our passions in the interest of others, and control of the same passions in our own interest; and wisdom or reason, which sometimes means any kind of excellence, sometimes the excellence of a harmonious society, and sometimes the excellence of a well-balanced mind. Thus, out of self-regarding virtue social virtue is elicited, the whole process being ultimately conditioned by that identifying power which was at once the strength and the weakness of Plato's genius.

Plato knew perfectly well that although rhetoricians and men of the world might be silenced, they could not be converted nor even convinced by such arguments as these. So far from thinking it possible to reason men into virtue, he has observed of those who are slaves to their senses that you must improve them before you can teach them the truth. And he

felt that if the complete assimilation of the individual and the community was to become more than a mere logical formula, it must be effected by a radical reform in the training of the one and in the institutions of the other. Accordingly, he set himself to elaborate a scheme for the purpose, our knowledge of which is chiefly derived from his greatest work, the *Republic*. We have already made large use of the negative criticism scattered through that Dialogue ; we have now to examine the positive teaching by which it was supplemented.

IV.

Plato, like Socrates, makes religious instruction the basis of education. But where the master had been content to set old beliefs on a new basis of demonstration, the disciple aimed at nothing less than their complete purification from irrational and immoral ingredients. He lays down two great principles, that God is good, and that He is true.[1] Every story which is inconsistent with such a character must be rejected ; so also must everything in the poets which redounds to the discredit of the national heroes, together with everything tending in the remotest degree to make vice attractive or virtue repellent. It is evident that Plato, like Xenophanes, repudiated not only the scandalous details of popular mythology, but also the anthropomorphic conceptions which lay at its foundation ; although he did not think it advisable to state his unbelief with equal frankness. His own theology was a sort of star-worship, and he proved the divinity of the heavenly bodies by an appeal to the uniformity of their movements.[2] He further taught that the world was created by an absolutely good Being ; but we cannot be sure that this was more than a popular version of the theory which placed the abstract idea of Good at the summit of the dialectic series. The truth is that there are two distinct types of religion, the one chiefly

[1] *Reptib.*, II., 379, A ; 380, D. [2] Zeller, 678–8.

interested in the existence and attributes of God, the other chiefly interested in the destiny of the human soul. The former is best represented by Judaism, the latter by Buddhism. Plato belongs to the psychic rather than to the theistic type. The doctrine of immortality appears again and again in his Dialogues, and one of the most beautiful among them is entirely devoted to proving it. He seems throughout to be conscious that he is arguing in favour of a paradox. Here, at least, there are no appeals to popular prejudice such as figure so largely in similar discussions among ourselves. The belief in immortality had long been stirring ; but it had not taken deep root among the Ionian Greeks. We cannot even be sure that it was embraced as a consoling hope by any but the highest minds anywhere in Hellas, or by them for more than a brief period. It would be easy to maintain that this arose from some natural incongeniality to the Greek imagination in thoughts which drew it away from the world of sense and the delights of earthly life. But the explanation breaks down immediately when we attempt to verify it by a wider experience. No modern nation enjoys life so keenly as the French. Yet, quite apart from traditional dogmas, there is no nation that counts so many earnest supporters of the belief in a spiritual existence beyond the grave. And, to take an individual example, it is just the keen relish which Mr. Browning's Cleon has for every sort of enjoyment which makes him shrink back with horror from the thought of annihilatiom, and grasp at any promise of a happiness to be prolonged through eternity. A closer examination is needed to show us by what causes the current of Greek thought was swayed.

The great religious movement of the sixth and fifth centuries—chiefly represented for us by the names of Pythagoras, Aeschylus, and Pindar—would in all probability have entirely won over the educated classes, and given definiteness to the half-articulate utterances of popular tradition, had it not been arrested prematurely by the development of physical

speculation. We showed in the first chapter that Greek philosophy in its earliest stages was entirely materialistic. It differed, indeed, from modern materialism in holding that the soul, or seat of conscious life, is an entity distinct from the body; but the distinction was one between a grosser and a finer matter, or else between a simpler and a more complex arrangement of the same matter, not between an extended and an indivisible substance. Whatever theories, then, were entertained with respect to the one would inevitably come to be entertained also with respect to the other. Now, with the exception of the Eleates, who denied the reality of change and separation altogether, every school agreed in teaching that all particular bodies are formed either by differentiation or by decomposition and recomposition out of the same primordial elements. From this it followed, as a natural consequence, that, although the whole mass of matter was eternal, each particular aggregate of matter must perish in order to release the elements required for the formation of new aggregates. It is obvious that, assuming the soul to be material, its immortality was irreconcilable with such a doctrine as this. A combination of four elements and two conflicting forces, such as Empedocles supposed the human mind to be, could not possibly outlast the organism in which it was enclosed; and if Empedocles himself, by an inconsistency not uncommon with men of genius, refused to draw the only legitimate conclusion from his own principles, the discrepancy could not fail to force itself on his successors. Still more fatal to the belief in a continuance of personal identity after death was the theory put forward by Diogenes of Apollonia, that there is really no personal identity even in life—that consciousness is only maintained by a perpetual inhalation of the vital air in which all reason resides. The soul very literally left the body with the last breath, and had a poor chance of holding together afterwards, especially, as the wits observed, if a high wind happened to be blowing at the time.

It would appear that even in the Pythagorean school there had been a reaction against a doctrine which its founder had been the first to popularise in Hellas. The Pythagoreans had always attributed great importance to the conceptions of harmony and numerical proportion; and they soon came to think of the soul as a ratio which the different elements of the animal body bore to one another; or as a musical concord resulting from the joint action of its various members, which might be compared to the strings of a lute. But

> 'When the lute is broken
> Sweet tones are remembered not.'

And so, with the dissolution of our bodily organism, the music of consciousness would pass away for ever. Perhaps no form of psychology taught in the Greek schools has approached nearer to modern thought than this. It was professed at Thebes by two Pythagoreans, Cebes and Simmias, in the time of Plato. He rightly regarded them as formidable opponents, for they were ready to grant whatever he claimed for the soul in the way of immateriality and superiority to the body, while denying the possibility of its separate existence. We may so far anticipate the course of our exposition as to mention that the direct argument by which he met them was a reference to the moving power of mind, and to the constraint exercised by reason over passionate impulse; characteristics which the analogy with a musical harmony failed to explain. But his chief reliance was on an order of considerations, the historical genesis of which we shall now proceed to trace.

It was by that somewhat slow and circuitous process, the negation of a negation, that spiritualism was finally established. The shadows of doubt gathered still more thickly around futurity before another attempt could be made to remove them. For the scepticism of the Humanists and the ethical dialectic of Socrates, if they tended to weaken the dogmatic materialism of physical philosophy, were at first

not more favourable to the new faith which that philosophy had suddenly eclipsed. For the one rejected every kind of supernaturalism ; and the other did not attempt to go behind what had been directly revealed by the gods, or was discoverable from an examination of their handiwork. Nevertheless, the new enquiries, with their exclusively subjective direction, paved the way for a return to the religious development previously in progress. By leading men to think of mind as, above all, a principle of knowledge and deliberate action, they altogether freed it from those material associations which brought it under the laws of external Nature, where every finite existence was destined, sooner or later, to be reabsorbed and to disappear. The position was completely reversed when Nature was, as it were, brought up before the bar of Mind to have her constitution determined or her very existence denied by that supreme tribunal. If the subjective idealism of Protagoras and Gorgias made for spiritualism, so also did the teleological religion of Socrates. It was impossible to assert the priority and superiority of mind to matter more strongly than by teaching that a designing intelligence had created the whole visible universe for the exclusive enjoyment of man. The infinite without was in its turn absorbed by the infinite within. Finally, the logical method of Socrates contained in itself the germs of a still subtler spiritualism which Plato now proceeded to work out.

The dialectic theory, considered in its relation to physics, tended to substitute the study of uniformity for the study of mechanical causation. But the general conceptions established by science were a kind of soul in Nature ; they were immaterial, they could not be perceived by sense, and yet, remaining as they did unchanged in a world of change, they were far truer, far more real, than the phenomena to which they gave unity and definition. Now these self-existent ideas, being subjective in their origin, readily reacted on

mind, and communicated to it those attributes of fixedness and eternal duration which had in truth been borrowed by them from Nature, not by Nature from them. Plato argued that the soul was in possession of ideas too pure to have been derived from the suggestions of sense, and therefore traceable to the reminiscences of an ante-natal experience. But we can see that the reminiscence was all on the side of the ideas; it was they that betrayed their human origin by the birthmark of abstraction and finality—betokening the limitation of man's faculties and the interest of his desires—which still clung to them when from a temporary law of thought they were erected into an everlasting law of things. As Comte would say, Plato was taking out of his conceptions what he had first put into them himself. And, if this consideration applies to all his reasonings on the subject of immortality, it applies especially to what he regards as the most convincing demonstration of any. There is one idea, he tells us, with which the soul is inseparably and essentially associated—namely, the idea of life. Without this, soul can no more be conceived than snow without cold or fire without heat; nor can death approach it without involving a logical contradiction. To assume that the soul is separable from the body, and that life is inseparable from the soul, was certainly an expeditious method of proof. To a modern, it would have the further disadvantage of proving too much. For, by parity of reasoning, every living thing must have an immortal soul, and every soul must have existed from all eternity. Plato frankly accepted both conclusions, and even incorporated them with his ethical system. He looked on the lower animals as so many stages in a progressive degradation to which human beings had descended through their own violence or sensuality, but from which it was possible for them to return after a certain period of penitence and probation. At other times he describes a hell, a purgatory, and a heaven, not unlike what we read of in

Dante, without apparently being conscious of any inconsistency between the two representations. It was, indeed, an inconsistency such as we find in the highest order of intellects, the inconsistency of one who mediated between two worlds, between naturalistic metempsychosis on the one side, and ethical individualism on the other.

It was not merely the immortality, it was the eternity of the soul that Plato taught. For him the expectation of a life beyond the grave was identified with the memory of an antenatal existence, and the two must stand or fall together. When Shelley's shipwrecked mother exclaims to her child :—

> 'Alas ! what is life, what is death, what are we,
> That when the ship sinks we no longer may be !
> What ! to see thee no more, and to feel thee no more,
> To be after life what we have been before ! '

Her despair is but the inverted image of Plato's hope, the return to a purer state of being where knowledge will no longer be obscured by passing through the perturbing medium of sight and touch. Again, modern apologists for the injustice and misery of the present system[1] argue that its inequalities will be redressed in a future state. Plato conversely regarded the sufferings of good men as a retribution for former sin, or as the result of a forgotten choice. The authority of Pindar and of ancient tradition generally may have influenced his belief, but it had a deeper ground in the logic of a spiritualistic philosophy. The dualism of soul and body is only one form of his fundamental antithesis between the changeless essence and the transitory manifestations of existence. A pantheism like Spinoza's was the natural outcome of such a system ; but his practical genius or his ardent imagination kept Plato from carrying it so far. Nor in the interests of progress was the result to be regretted ; for theology had to pass through one more phase before the term of its beneficent activity could be reached. Ethical conceptions gained a new

[1] 'Un monde qui est l'injustice même.'—Ernest Renan, *L'Église Chrétienne*, p. 139.

ignificance in the blended light of mythology and meta-
hysics ; those who made it their trade to pervert justice at its
ountain-head might still tremble before the terrors of a
upernatural tribunal ; or if Plato could not regenerate the
ife of his own people he could foretell what was to be the
ommon faith of Europe in another thousand years ; and
nemory, if not hope, is the richer for those magnificent visions
vhere he has projected the eternal conflict between good and
vil into the silence and darkness by which our lives are shut
n on every side.

V.

Plato had begun by condemning poetry only in so far as
t was inconsistent with true religion and morality. At last,
with his usual propensity to generalise, he condemned it and,
by implication, every imitative art *quâ* art, as a delusion and
a sham, twice removed from the truth of things, because a copy
of the phenomena which are themselves unreal representations
of an archetypal idea. His iconoclasm may remind us of
other ethical theologians both before and after, whether
Hebrew, Moslem, or Puritan. If he does not share their
fanatical hatred for plastic and pictorial representations, it is
only because works of that class, besides being of a chaster
character, exercised far less power over the Greek imagination
than epic and dramatic poetry. Moreover, the tales of the
poets were, according to Plato, the worst lies of any, since
they were believed to be true ; whereas statues and pictures
differed too obviously from their originals for any such illusion
to be produced in their case. Like the Puritans, again, Plato
sanctioned the use of religious hymns, with the accompani-
ment of music in its simplest and most elevated forms. Like
them, also, he would have approved of literary fiction when it
was employed for edifying purposes. Works like the *Faery
Queen*, *Paradise Lost*, and the *Pilgrim's Progress*, would have
been his favourites in English literature ; and he might have

extended the same indulgence to fictions of the Edgeworthian type, where the virtuous characters always come off best in the end.

The reformed system of education was to be not only moral and religious but also severely scientific. The place given to mathematics as the foundation of a right intellectual training is most remarkable, and shows how truly Plato apprehended the conditions under which knowledge is acquired and enlarged. Here, as in other respects, he is, more even than Aristotle, the precursor of Auguste Comte. He arranges the mathematical sciences, so far as they then existed, in their logical order; and his remarks on the most general ideas suggested by astronomy read like a divination of rational mechanics. That a recommendation of such studies should be put into the mouth of Socrates is a striking incongruity. The older Plato grew the farther he seems to have advanced from the humanist to the naturalistic point of view; and, had he been willing to confess it, Hippias and Prodicus were the teachers with whom he finally found himself most in sympathy.

Macaulay has spoken as if the Platonic philosophy was totally unrelated to the material wants of men. This, however, is a mistake. It is true that, in the *Republic*, science is not regarded as an instrument for heaping up fresh luxuries, or for curing the diseases which luxury breeds; but only because its purpose is held to be the discovery of those conditions under which a healthy, happy, and virtuous race can best be reared. The art of the true statesman is to weave the web of life with perfect skill, to bring together those couples from whose union the noblest progeny shall issue; and it is only by mastering the laws of the physical universe that this art can be acquired. Plato knew no natural laws but those of mathematics and astronomy; consequently, he set far too much store on the times and seasons at which bride and bridegroom were to meet, and on the numerical ratios by which they were supposed to be determined. He even tells

us about a mysterious formula for discovering the nuptial number, by which the ingenuity of commentators has been considerably exercised. The true laws by which marriage should be regulated among a civilised people have remained wrapped in still more impenetrable darkness. Whatever may be the best solution, it can hardly fail to differ in many respects from our present customs. It cannot be right that the most important act in the life of a human being should be determined by social ambition, by avarice, by vanity, by pique, or by accident—in a word, by the most contemptible impulses of which human nature is susceptible ; nor is it to be expected that sexual selection will always necessitate the employment of insincerity, adulation, and bribery by one of the parties concerned, while fostering in the other credulity, egoism, jealousy, capriciousness, and petty tyranny—the very qualities which a wise training would have for its object to root out.[1]

It seems difficult to reconcile views about marriage involving a recognition of the fact that mental and moral qualities are hereditarily transmitted, with the belief in metempsychosis elsewhere professed by Plato. But perhaps his adhesion to the latter doctrine is not to be taken very seriously. In imitation of the objective world, whose essential truth is half hidden and half disclosed by its phenomenal manifestations, he loves to present his speculative teaching under a mythical disguise ; and so he may have chosen the old doctrine of transmigration as an apt expression for the unity and continuity of life. And, at worst, he would not be guilty of any greater inconsistency than is chargeable to those modern philosophers who, while they admit that mental qualities are inherited, hold each individual soul to be a separate and independent creation.

The rules for breeding and education set forth in the *Republic* are not intended for the whole community, but only

[1] Cf. *Lysis*, 210, E. Jowett, I., 54.

for the ruling minority. It was by the corruption of the higher classes that Plato was most distressed, and the salvation of the State depended, according to him, on their reformation. This leads us on to his scheme for the reconstitution of society. It is intimately connected with his method of logical definition and classification. He shows with great force that the collective action of human beings is conditioned by the division of labour; and argues from this that every individual ought, in the interest of the whole, to be restricted to a single occupation. Therefore, the industrial classes, who form the bulk of the population, are to be excluded both from military service and from political power. The Peloponnesian War had led to a general substitution of professional soldiers for the old levies of untrained citizens in Greek warfare. Plato was deeply impressed by the dangers, as well as by the advantages, of this revolution. That each profession should be exercised only by persons trained for it, suited his notions alike as a logician, a teacher, and a practical reformer. But he saw that mercenary fighters might use their power to oppress and plunder the defenceless citizens, or to establish a military despotism. And, holding that government should, like strategy, be exercised only by functionaries naturally fitted and expressly trained for the work, he saw equally that a privileged class would be tempted to abuse their position in order to fill their pockets and to gratify their passions. He proposed to provide against these dangers, first by the new system of education already described, and secondly by pushing the division of labour to its logical conclusion. That they might the better attend to their specific duties, the defenders and the rulers of the State were not to practise the art of money-making; in other words, they were not to possess any property of their own, but were to be supported by the labour of the industrial classes. Furthermore, that they need not quarrel among themselves, he proposed that every private interest should be eliminated

from their lives, and that they should, as a class, be united by the closest bonds of family affection. This purpose was to be effected by the abolition of marriage and of domesticity. The couples chosen for breeding were to be separated when the object of their union had been attained ; children were to be taken from their mothers immediately after birth and brought up at the expense and under the supervision of the State. Sickly and deformed infants were to be destroyed. Those who fell short of the aristocratic standard were to be degraded, and their places filled up by the exceptionally gifted offspring of low-class parents. Members of the military and governing caste were to address each other according to the kinship which might possibly exist between them. In the absence of home-employments, women were to be, so far as possible, assimilated to men ; to pass through the same bodily and mental training ; to be enrolled in the army ; and, if they showed the necessary capacity, to discharge the highest political functions. In this practical dialectic the identifying no less than the differentiating power of logic is displayed, and displayed also in defiance of common ideas, as in the modern classifications of zoology and botany. Plato introduces distinctions where they did not before exist, and annuls those which were already recognised. The sexes were to be assimilated, political life was to be identified with family life, and the whole community was to present an exact parallel with the individual soul. The ruling committee corresponded to reason, the army to passionate spirit, and the industrial classes to the animal desires ; and each, in its perfect constitution, represented one of the cardinal virtues as reinterpreted by Plato. Wisdom belonged to the ruling part, courage to the intermediate executive power, and temperance or obedience to the organs of material existence ; while justice meant the general harmony resulting from the fulfilment of their appropriate functions by all. We may add that the whole State reproduced the Greek family in a much

deeper sense than Plato himself was aware of. For his aristocracy represents the man, whose virtue, in the words of Gorgias, was to 'administer the State;' and his industrial class takes the place of the woman, whose duty was 'to order her house, and keep what is indoors, and obey her husband.'[1]

Such was the celebrated scheme by which Plato proposed to regenerate mankind. We have already taken occasion to show how it was connected with his ethical and dialectical philosophy. We have now to consider in what relation it stands to the political experience of his own and other times, as well as to the revolutionary proposals of other speculative reformers.

VI.

According to Hegel,[2] the Platonic polity, so far from being an impracticable dream, had already found its realisation in Greek life, and did but give a purer expression to the constitutive principle of every ancient commonwealth. There are, he tells us, three stages in the moral development of mankind. The first is purely objective. It represents a régime where rules of conduct are entirely imposed from without; they are, as it were, embodied in the framework of society; they rest, not on reason and conscience, but on authority and tradition; they will not suffer themselves to be questioned, for, being unproved, a doubt would be fatal to their very existence. Here the individual is completely sacrificed to the State; but in the second or subjective stage he breaks loose, asserting the right of his private judgment and will as against the established order of things. This revolution was, still according to Hegel, begun by the Sophists and Socrates. It proved altogether incompatible with the spirit of Greek civilisation, which it ended by shattering to pieces. The subjective principle found an

[1] *Meno*, 71, E. Jowett, I., 270.

[2] *Gesch. d. Ph.*, II, 272.

appropriate expression in Christianity, which attributes an infinite importance to the individual soul; and it appears also in the political philosophy of Rousseau. We may observe that it corresponds very nearly to what Auguste Comte meant by the metaphysical period. The modern State reconciles both principles, allowing the individual his full development, and at the same time incorporating him with a larger whole, where, for the first time, he finds his own reason fully realised. Now, Hegel looks on the Platonic republic as a reaction against the subjective individualism, the right of private judgment, the self-seeking impulse, or whatever else it is to be called, which was fast eating into the heart of Greek civilisation. To counteract this fatal tendency, Plato goes back to the constitutive principle of Greek society—that is to say, the omnipotence, or, in Benthamite parlance, omnicompetence, of the State; exhibiting it, in ideal perfection, as the suppression of individual liberty under every form, more especially the fundamental forms of property, marriage, and domestic life.

It seems to us that Hegel, in his anxiety to crush every historical process into the narrow symmetry of a favourite metaphysical formula, has confounded several entirely distinct conceptions under the common name of subjectivity. First, there is the right of private judgment, the claim of each individual to have a voice in the affairs of the State, and to have the free management of his own personal concerns. But this, so far from being modern, is one of the oldest customs of the Aryan race; and perhaps, could we look back to the oldest history of other races now despotically governed, we should find it prevailing among them also. It was no new nor unheard-of privilege that Rousseau vindicated for the peoples of his own time, but their ancient birthright, taken from them by the growth of a centralised military system, just as it had been formerly taken from the city communities of the Graeco-Roman world. In this respect, Plato goes against the whole

spirit of his country, and no period of its development, not even the age of Homer, would have satisfied him.

We have next the disposition of individuals, no longer to interfere in making the law, but to override it, or to bend it into an instrument for their own purposes. Doubtless there existed such a tendency in Plato's time, and his polity was very largely designed to hold it in check. But such unprincipled ambition was nothing new in Greece, however the mode of its manifestations might vary. What had formerly been seized by armed violence was now sought after with the more subtle weapons of rhetorical skill; just as at the present moment, among these same Greeks, it is the prize of parliamentary intrigue. The Cretan and Spartan institutions may very possibly have been designed with a view to checking this spirit of selfish lawlessness, by reducing private interests to a minimum; and Plato most certainly had them in his mind when he pushed the same method still further; but those institutions were not types of Hellenism as a whole, they only represented one, and that a very abnormal, side of it. Plato borrowed some elements from this quarter, but, as we shall presently show, he incorporated them with others of a widely different character. Sparta was, indeed, on any high theory of government, not a State at all, but a robber-clan established among a plundered population whom they never tried or cared to conciliate. How little weight her rulers attributed to the interests of the State as such, was well exhibited during the Peloponnesian War, when political advantages of the utmost importance were surrendered in deference to the noble families whose kinsmen had been captured at Sphactêria, and whose sole object was to rescue them from the fate with which they were threatened by the Athenians as a means of extorting concessions;—conduct with which the refusal of Rome to ransom the soldiers who had surrendered at Cannae may be instructively contrasted.

We have, thirdly, to consider a form of individualism

directly opposed in character to those already specified. It is the complete withdrawal from public affairs for the sake of attending exclusively to one's private duties or pleasures. Such individualism is the characteristic weakness of conservatives, who are, by their very nature, the party of timidity and quiescence. To them was addressed the exhortation of Cato, *capessenda est respublica.* The two other forms of which we have spoken are, on the contrary, diseases of liberalism. We see them exemplified when the leaders of a party are harassed by the perpetual criticism of their professed supporters; or, again, when an election is lost because the votes of the Liberal electors are divided among several candidates. But when a party—generally the Conservative party—loses an election because its voters will not go to the poll, that is owing to the lazy individualism which shuns political contests altogether. It was of this disease that the public life of Athens really perished; and, so far, Hegel is on the right track; but although its action was more obviously and immediately fatal in antiquity, we are by no means safe from a repetition of the same experience in modern society. Nor can it be said that Plato reacted against an evil which, in his eyes, was an evil only when it deprived a very few properly-qualified persons of political supremacy. With regard to all others he proposed to sanction and systematise what was already becoming a common custom—namely, entire withdrawal from the administration of affairs in peace and war. Hegel seems to forget that it is only a single class, and that the smallest, in Plato's republic which is not allowed to have any private interests; while the industrial classes, necessarily forming a large majority of the whole population, are not only suffered to retain their property and their families, but are altogether thrown back for mental occupation on the interests arising out of these. The resulting state of things would have found its best parallel, not in old Greek city life, but in modern Europe, as it was between the Reformation and the French Revolution.

The three forms of individualism already enumerated do not exhaust the general conception of subjectivity. According to Hegel, if we understand him aright, the most important aspect of the principle in question would be the philosophical side, the return of thought on itself, already latent in physical speculation, proclaimed by the Sophists as an all-dissolving scepticism, and worked up into a theory of life by Socrates. That there was such a movement is, of course, certain ; but that it contributed perceptibly to the decay of old Greek morality, or that it was essentially opposed to the old Greek spirit, cannot, we think, be truly asserted. What has been already observed of political liberty and of political unscrupulousness may be repeated of intellectual inquisitiveness, rationalism, scepticism, or by whatever name the tendency in question is to be called—it always was, and still is, essentially characteristic of the Greek race. It may very possibly have been a source of political disintegration at all times, but that it became so to a greater extent after assuming the form of systematic speculation has never been proved. If the study of science, or the passion for intellectual gymnastics, drew men away from the duties of public life, it was simply as one more private interest among many, just like feasting, or lovemaking, or travelling, or poetry, or any other of the occupations in which a wealthy Greek delighted ; not from any intrinsic incompatibility with the duties of a statesman or a soldier. So far, indeed, was this from being true, that liberal studies, even of the abstrusest order, were pursued with every advantage to their patriotic energy by such citizens as Zeno, Melissus, Empedocles, and, above all, by Pericles and Epameinondas. If Socrates stood aloof from public business it was that he might have more leisure to train others for its proper performance ; and he himself, when called upon to serve the State, proved fully equal to the emergency. As for the Sophists, it is well known that their profession was to give young men the sort of education which would enable

them to fill the highest political offices with honour and advantage. It is true that such a special preparation would end by throwing increased difficulties in the way of a career which it was originally intended to facilitate, by raising the standard of technical proficiency in statesmanship; and that many possible aspirants would, in consequence, be driven back on less arduous pursuits. But Plato was so far from opposing this specialisation that he wished to carry it much farther, and to make government the exclusive business of a small class who were to be physiologically selected and to receive an education far more elaborate than any that the Sophists could give. If, however, we consider Plato not as the constructor of a new constitution but in relation to the politics of his own time, we must admit that his whole influence was used to set public affairs in a hateful and contemptible light. So far, therefore, as philosophy was represented by him, it must count for a disintegrating force. But in just the same degree we are precluded from assimilating his idea of a State to the old Hellenic model. We must rather say, what he himself would have said, that it never was realised anywhere; although, as we shall presently see, a certain approach to it was made in the Middle Ages.

Once more, looking at the whole current of Greek philosophy, and especially the philosophy of mind, are we entitled to say that it encouraged, if it did not create, those other forms of individualism already defined as mutinous criticism on the part of the people, and selfish ambition on the part of its chiefs? Some historians have maintained that there was such a connexion, operating, if not directly, at least through a chain of intermediate causes. Free thought destroyed religion, with religion fell morality, and with morality whatever restraints had hitherto kept anarchic tendencies of every description within bounds. These are interesting reflections; but they do not concern us here, for the issue raised by Hegel is entirely different. It matters nothing to him that Socrates was a staunch

defender of supernaturalism and of the received morality. The essential antithesis is between the Socratic introspection and the Socratic dialectics on the one side, and the unquestioned authority of ancient institutions on the other. If this be what Hegel means, we must once more record our dissent. We cannot admit that the philosophy of subjectivity, so interpreted, was a decomposing ferment; nor that the spirit of Plato's republic was, in any case, a protest against it. The Delphic precept, 'Know thyself,' meant in the mouth of Socrates: Let every man find out what work he is best fitted for, and stick to that, without meddling in matters for which he is not qualified. The Socratic dialectic meant: Let the whole field of knowledge be similarly studied; let our ideas on all subjects be so systematised that we shall be able to discover at a moment's notice the bearing of any one of them on any of the others, or on any new question brought up for decision. Surely nothing could well be less individualistic, in a bad sense, less anti-social, less anarchic than this. Nor does Plato oppose, he generalises his master's principles; he works out the psychology and dialectic of the whole state; and if the members of his governing class are not permitted to have any separate interests in their individual capacity, each individual soul is exalted to the highest dignity by having the community reorganised on the model of its own internal economy. There are no violent peripeteias in this great drama of thought, but everywhere harmony, continuity, and gradual development.

We have entered at some length into Hegel's theory of the *Republic*, because it seems to embody a misleading conception not only of Greek politics but also of the most important attempt at a social reformation ever made by one man in the history of philosophy. Thought would be much less worth studying if it only reproduced the abstract form of a very limited experience, instead of analysing and recombining the elements of which that experience is composed. And our

faith in the power of conscious efforts towards improvement will very much depend on which side of the alternative we accept.

Zeller, while taking a much wider view than Hegel, still assumes that Plato's reforms, so far as they were suggested by experience, were simply an adaptation of Dorian practices.[1] He certainly succeeds in showing that private property, marriage, education, individual liberty, and personal morality were subjected, at least in Sparta, to many restrictions resembling those imposed in the Platonic state. And Plato himself, by treating the Spartan system as the first form of degeneration from his own ideal, seems to indicate that this of all existing polities made the nearest approach to it. The declarations of the *Timaeus*[2] are, however, much more distinct; and according to them it was in the caste-divisions of Egypt that he found the nearest parallel to his own scheme of social reorganisation. There, too, the priests, or wise men came first, and after them the warriors, while the different branches of industry were separated from one another by rigid demarcations. He may also have been struck by that free admission of women to employments elsewhere filled exclusively by men, which so surprised Herodotus, from his inability to discern its real cause—the more advanced differentiation of Egyptian as compared with Greek society.[3]

VII.

But a profounder analysis of experience is necessary before we can come to the real roots of Plato's scheme. It must be remembered that our philosopher was a revolutionist of the most thorough-going description, that he objected not to this or that constitution of his time, but to all existing consti-

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 777. [2] *Timaeus*, 24, A. Jowett, III., 608.
[3] Cf. the excellent remarks of Teichmüller, *Lit. Fehden*, p. 107.

tutions whatever. Now, every great revolutionary movement, if in some respects an advance and an evolution, is in other respects a retrogression and a dissolution. When the most complex forms of political association are broken up, the older or subordinate forms suddenly acquire new life and meaning. What is true of practice is true also of speculation. Having broken away from the most advanced civilisation, Plato was thrown back on the spontaneous organisation of industry, on the army, the school, the family, the savage tribe, and even the herd of cattle, for types of social union. It was by taking some hints from each of these minor aggregates that he succeeded in building up his ideal polity, which, notwithstanding its supposed simplicity and consistency, is one of the most heterogeneous ever framed. The principles on which it rests are not really carried out to their logical consequences; they interfere with and supplement one another. The restriction of political power to a single class is avowedly based on the necessity for a division of labour. One man, we are told, can only do one thing well. But Plato should have seen that the producer is not for that reason to be made a monopolist; and that, to borrow his own favourite example, shoes are properly manufactured because the shoemaker is kept in order by the competition of his rivals and by the freedom of the consumer to purchase wherever he pleases. Athenian democracy, so far from contradicting the lessons of political economy, was, in truth, their logical application to government. The people did not really govern themselves, nor do they in any modern democracy, but they listened to different proposals, just as they might choose among different articles in a shop or different tenders for building a house, accepted the most suitable, and then left it to be carried out by their trusted agents.

Again, Plato is false to his own rule when he selects his philosophic governors out of the military caste. If the same individual can be a warrior in his youth and an administrator

in his riper years, one man can do two things well, though not at the same time. If the same person can be born with the qualifications both of a soldier and of a politician, and can be fitted by education for each calling in succession, surely a much greater number can combine the functions of a manual labourer with those of an elector. What prevented Plato from perceiving this obvious parallel was the tradition of the paterfamilias who had always been a warrior in his youth; and a commendable anxiety to keep the army closely connected with the civil power. The analogies of domestic life have also a great deal to do with his proposed community of women and children. Instead of undervaluing the family affections, he immensely overvalued them; as is shown by his supposition that the bonds of consanguinity would prevent dissensions from arising among his warriors. He should have known that many a home is the scene of constant wrangling, and that quarrels between kinsfolk are the bitterest of any. Then, looking on the State as a great school, Plato imagined that the obedience, docility, and credulity of young scholars could be kept up through a lifetime; that full-grown citizens would swallow the absurdest inventions; and that middle-aged officers could be sent into retirement for several years to study dialectic. To suppose that statesmen must necessarily be formed by the discipline in question is another scholastic trait. The professional teacher attributes far more practical importance to his abstruser lessons than they really possess. He is not content to wait for the indirect influence which they may exert at some remote period and in combination with forces of perhaps a widely different character. He looks for immediate and telling results. He imagines that the highest truth must have a mysterious power of transforming all things into its own likeness, or at least of making its learners more capable than other men of doing the world's work. Here also Plato, instead of being too logical, was not logical

enough. By following out the laws of economy, as applied to mental labour, he might have arrived at the separation of the spiritual and temporal powers, and thus anticipated the best established social doctrine of our time.

With regard to the propagation of the race, Plato's methods are avowedly borrowed from those practised by bird-fanciers, horse-trainers, and cattle-breeders. It had long been a Greek custom to compare the people to a flock of sheep and their ruler to a shepherd, phrases which still survive in ecclesiastical parlance. Socrates habitually employed the same simile in his political discussions; and the rhetoricians used it as a justification of the governors who enriched themselves at the expense of those committed to their charge. Plato twisted the argument out of their hands and showed that the shepherd, as such, studies nothing but the good of his sheep. He failed to perceive that the parallel could not be carried out in every detail, and that, quite apart from more elevated considerations, the system which secures a healthy progeny in the one case cannot be transferred to creatures possessing a vastly more complex and delicate organisation. The destruction of sickly and deformed children could only be justified on the hypothesis that none but physical qualities were of any value to the community. Our philosopher forgets his own distinction between soul and body just when he most needed to remember it.

The position assigned to women by Plato may perhaps have seemed to his contemporaries the most paradoxical of all his projects, and it has been observed that here he is in advance even of our own age. But a true conclusion may be deduced from false premises; and Plato's conclusion is not even identical with that reached on other grounds by the modern advocates of women's rights, or rather of their equitable claims. The author of the *Republic* detested democracy; and the enfranchisement of women is now demanded as a part of

the general democratic programme. It is an axiom, at least with liberals, that no class will have its interests properly attended to which is left without a voice in the election of parliamentary representatives; and the interests of the sexes are not more obviously identical than those of producers and consumers, or of capitalists and labourers. Another democratic principle is that individuals are, as a rule, the best judges of what occupation they are fit for; and as a consequence of this it is further demanded that women should be admitted to every employment on equal terms with men; leaving competition to decide in each instance whether they are suited for it or not. Their continued exclusion from the military profession would be an exception more apparent than real; because, like the majority of the male sex, they are physically disqualified for it. Now, the profession of arms is the very one for which Plato proposes to destine the daughters of his aristocratic caste, without the least intention of consulting their wishes on the subject. He is perfectly aware that his own principle of differentiation will be quoted against him, but he turns the difficulty in a very dexterous manner. He contends that the difference of the sexes, so far as strength and intelligence are concerned, is one not of kind but of degree; for women are not distinguished from men by the possession of any special aptitude, none of them being able to do anything that some men cannot do better. Granting the truth of this rather unflattering assumption, the inference drawn from it will still remain economically unsound. The division of labour requires that each task should be performed, not by those who are absolutely, but by those who are relatively, best fitted for it. In many cases we must be content with work falling short of the highest attainable standard, that the time and abilities of the best workmen may be exclusively devoted to functions for which they alone are competent. Even if women could be trained to fight, it does not follow that their energies might not be more advantageously

expended in another direction. Here, again, Plato improperly reasons from low to high forms of association. He appeals to the doubtful example of nomadic tribes, whose women took part in the defence of the camps, and to the fighting power possessed by the females of predatory animals. In truth, the elimination of home life left his women without any employment peculiar to themselves ; and so, not to leave them completely idle, they were drafted into the army, more with the hope of imposing on the enemy by an increase of its apparent strength than for the sake of any real service which they were expected to perform.[1] When Plato proposes that women of proved ability should be admitted to the highest political offices, he is far more in sympathy with modern reformers ; and his freedom from prejudice is all the more remarkable when we consider that no Greek lady (except, perhaps, Artemisia) is known to have ever displayed a talent for government, although feminine interference in politics was common enough at Sparta ; and that personally his feeling towards women was unsympathetic if not contemptuous.[2] Still we must not exaggerate the importance of his concession. The Platonic polity was, after all, a family rather than a true State ; and that women should be allowed a share in the regulation of marriage and in the nurture of children, was only giving them back with one hand what had been taken away with the other. Already, among ourselves, women have a voice in educational matters ; and were marriage brought under State control, few would doubt the propriety of making them eligible to the new Boards which would be charged with its supervision.

The foregoing analysis will enable us to appreciate the true significance of the resemblance pointed out by Zeller[3]

[1] *Repub.*, V., 471, D.

[2] He mentions as one of the worst effects of a democracy that it made them assume airs of equality with men. *Repub.*, 563. B. ; cf. 569, E. *Timaeus*, 90, E. It is to be feared that Plato regarded woman as the missing link.

[3] In his *Vorträge und Abhandlungen*, first series, p. 68.

between the Platonic republic and the organisation of mediaeval society. The importance given to religious and moral training; the predominance of the priesthood; the sharp distinction drawn between the military caste and the industrial population; the exclusion of the latter from political power; the partial abolition of marriage and property; and, it might be added, the high position enjoyed by women as regents, châtelaines, abbesses, and sometimes even as warriors or professors,—are all innovations more in the spirit of Plato than in the spirit of Pericles. Three converging influences united to bring about this extraordinary verification of a philosophical ideal. The profound spiritual revolution effected by Greek thought was taken up and continued by Catholicism, and unconsciously guided to the same practical conclusions the teaching which it had in great part originally inspired. Social differentiation went on at the same time, and led to the political consequences logically deduced from it by Plato. And the barbarian conquest of Rome brought in its train some of those more primitive habits on which his breach with civilisation had equally thrown him back. Thus the coincidence between Plato's *Republic* and mediaeval polity is due in one direction to causal agency, in another to speculative insight, and in a third to parallelism of effects, independent of each other but arising out of analogous conditions.

If, now, we proceed to compare the *Republic* with more recent schemes having also for their object the identification of public with private interests, nothing, at first sight, seems to resemble it so closely as the theories of modern Communism; especially those which advocate the abolition not only of private property but also of marriage. The similarity, however, is merely superficial, and covers a radical divergence. For, to begin with, the Platonic polity is not a system of Communism at all, in our sense of the word. It is not that the members of the ruling caste are to throw their property into a common fund; neither as individuals nor as a class do

they possess any property whatever. Their wants are provided for by the industrial classes, who apparently continue to live under the old system of particularism. What Plato had in view was not to increase the sum of individual enjoyments by enforcing an equal division of their material means, but to eliminate individualism altogether, and thus give human feeling the absolute generality which he so much admired in abstract ideas. On the other hand, unless we are mistaken, modern Communism has no objection to private property as such, could it remain divided either with absolute equality or in strict proportion to the wants of its holders; but only as the inevitable cause of inequalities which advancing civilisation seems to aggravate rather than to redress. So also with marriage; the modern assailants of that institution object to it as a restraint on the freedom of individual passion, which, according to them, would secure the maximum of pleasure by perpetually varying its objects. Plato would have looked on such reasonings as a parody and perversion of his own doctrine; as in very truth, what some of them have professed to be, pleas for the rehabilitation of the flesh in its original supremacy over the spirit, and therefore the direct opposite of a system which sought to spiritualise by generalising the interests of life. And so, when in the *Laws* he gives his Communistic principles their complete logical development by extending them to the whole population, he is careful to preserve their philosophical character as the absorption of individual in social existence.[1]

The parentage of the two ideas will further elucidate their essentially heterogeneous character. For modern Communism is an outgrowth of the democratic tendencies which Plato detested; and as such had its counterpart in ancient Athens, if we may trust the *Ecclêsiazusae* of Aristophanes, where also it is associated with unbridled licentiousness.[2] Plato, on the

[1] *Legg.*, 739, B. Jowett, V., 311.

[2] [Since the above was first published, Teichmüller has brought forward new

contrary, seems to have received the first suggestion of his Communism from the Pythagorean and aristocratic confraternities of Southern Italy, where the principle that friends have all things in common was an accepted maxim.

If Plato stands at the very antipodes of Fourier and St. Simon, he is connected by a real relationship with those thinkers who, like Auguste Comte and Mr. Herbert Spencer, have based their social systems on a wide survey of physical science and human history. It is even probable that his ideas have exercised a decided though not a direct influence on the two writers whom we have named. For Comte avowedly took many of his proposed reforms from the organisation of mediaeval Catholicism, which was a translation of philosophy into dogma and discipline, just as Positivism is a re-translation of theology into the human thought from which it sprang. And Mr. Spencer's system, while it seems to be the direct antithesis of Plato's, might claim kindred with it through the principle of differentiation and integration, which, after passing from Greek thought into political economy and physiology, has been restored by our illustrious countryman to something more than its original generality. It has also to be observed that the application of very abstract truths to political science needs to be most jealously guarded, since their elasticity increases in direct proportion to their width. When one thinker argues from the law of increasing specialisation to a vast extension of governmental interference with personal liberty, and another thinker to its restriction within the narrowest possible limits, it seems time to consider whether experience and expediency are not, after all, the safest guides to trust.

arguments to prove that it was Plato's scheme of Communism which Aristophanes intended to satirise (*Lit. Fehden*, pp. 14, ff.); but I do not think that even the first half of the *Republic* could possibly have been composed at such an early date as that assigned to it by this learned and ingenious critic.]

VIII.

The social studies through which we have accompanied Plato seem to have reacted on his more abstract speculations, and to have largely modified the extreme opposition in which these had formerly stood to current notions, whether of a popular or a philosophical character. The change first becomes perceptible in his theory of Ideas. This is a subject on which, for the sake of greater clearness, we have hitherto refrained from entering ; and that we should have succeeded in avoiding it so long would seem to prove that the doctrine in question forms a much less important part of his philosophy than is commonly imagined. Perhaps, as some think, it was not an original invention of his own, but was borrowed from the Megarian school ; and the mythical connexion in which it frequently figures makes us doubtful how far he ever thoroughly accepted it. The theory is, that to every abstract name or conception of the mind there corresponds an objective entity possessing a separate existence quite distinct from that of the scattered particulars by which it is exemplified to our senses or to our imagination. Just as the Heracleitean flux represented the confusion of which Socrates convicted his interlocutors, so also did these Ideas represent the definitions by which he sought to bring method and certainty into their opinions. It may be that, as Grote suggests, Plato adopted this hypothesis in order to escape from the difficulty of defining common notions in a satisfactory manner. It is certain that his earliest Dialogues seem to place true definitions beyond the reach of human knowledge. And at the beginning of Plato's constructive period we find the recognition of abstract conceptions, whether mathematical or moral, traced to the remembrance of an ante-natal state, where the soul held direct converse with the transcendent realities to which those conceptions correspond. Justice, temperance, beauty, and goodness, are especially mentioned as examples

of Ideas revealed in this manner. Subsequent investigations must, however, have led Plato to believe that the highest truths are to be found by analysing not the loose contents but the fixed forms of consciousness; and that, if each virtue expressed a particular relation between the various parts of the soul, no external experience was needed to make her acquainted with its meaning; still less could conceptions arising out of her connexion with the material world be explained by reference to a sphere of purely spiritual existence. At the same time, innate ideas would no longer be required to prove her incorporeality, when the authority of reason over sense furnished so much more satisfactory a ground for believing the two to be of different origin. To all who have studied the evolution of modern thought, the substitution of Kantian forms for Cartesian ideas will at once elucidate and confirm our hypothesis of a similar reformation in Plato's metaphysics.

Again, the new position occupied by Mind as an intermediary between the world of reality and the world of appearance, tended more and more to obliterate or confuse the demarcations by which they had hitherto been separated. The most general headings under which it was usual to contrast them were, the One and the Many, Being and Nothing, the Same and the Different, Rest and Motion. Parmenides employed the one set of terms to describe his Absolute, and the other to describe the objects of vulgar belief. They also served respectively to designate the wise and the ignorant, the dialectician and the sophist, the knowledge of gods and the opinions of men; besides offering points of contact with the antithetical couples of Pythagoreanism. But Plato gradually found that the nature of Mind could not be understood without taking both points of view into account. Unity and plurality, sameness and difference, equally entered into its composition; although undoubtedly belonging to the sphere of reality, it was self-

moved and the cause of all motion in other things. The dialectic or classificatory method, with its progressive series of differentiations and assimilations, also involved a continual use of categories which were held to be mutually exclusive. And on proceeding to an examination of the summa genera, the highest and most abstract ideas which it had been sought to distinguish by their absolute purity and simplicity from the shifting chaos of sensible phenomena, Plato discovered that even these were reduced to a maze of confusion and contradiction by a sincere application of the cross-examining elenchus. For example, to predicate being of the One was to mix it up with a heterogeneous idea and let in the very plurality which it denied. To distinguish them was to predicate difference of both, and thus open the door to fresh embarrassments.

Finally, while the attempt to attain extreme accuracy of definition was leading to the destruction of all thought and all reality within the Socratic school, the dialectic method had been taken up and parodied in a very coarse style by a class of persons called Eristics. These men had, to some extent, usurped the place of the elder Sophists as paid instructors of youth; but their only accomplishment was to upset every possible assertion by a series of verbal juggles. One of their favourite paradoxes was to deny the reality of falsehood on the Parmenidean principle that 'nothing cannot exist.' Plato satirises their method in the *Euthydêmus*, and makes a much more serious attempt to meet it in the *Sophist*; two Dialogues which seem to have been composed not far from one another.[1] The *Sophist* effects a considerable simplification in the ideal theory by resolving negation into difference, and altogether omitting the notions of unity and plurality,—perhaps as a result of the investiga-

[1] [Here, also, the recent arguments of Teichmüller (*Lit. Fehden*, p. 51) deserve attention, but they have failed to convince me that an earlier date should be assigned to the *Euthydêmus*.]

tions contained in the *Parmenides*, another dialogue belonging to the same group, where the couple referred to are analysed with great minuteness, and are shown to be infected with numerous self-contradictions. The remaining five ideas of Existence, Sameness, Difference, Rest, and Motion, are allowed to stand ; but the fact of their inseparable connexion is brought out with great force and clearness. The enquiry is one of considerable interest, including, as it does, the earliest known analysis of predication, and forming an indispensable link in the transition from Platonic to Aristotelian logic—that is to say, from the theory of definition and classification to the theory of syllogism.

Once the Ideas had been brought into mutual relation and shown to be compounded with one another, the task of connecting them with the external world became considerably easier ; and the same intermediary which before had linked them to it as a participant in the nature of both, was now raised to a higher position and became the efficient cause of their intimate union. Such is the standpoint of the *Philêbus*, where all existence is divided into four classes, the limit, the unlimited, the union of both, and the cause of their union. Mind belongs to the last and matter to the second class. There can hardly be a doubt that the first class is either identical with the Ideas or fills the place once occupied by them. The third class is the world of experience, the Cosmos of early Greek thought, which Plato had now come to look on as a worthy object of study. In the *Timaeus*, also a very late Dialogue, he goes further, and gives us a complete cosmogony, the general conception of which is clear enough, although the details are avowedly conjectural and figurative ; nor do they seem to have exercised any influence or subsequent speculation until the time of Descartes. We are told that the world was created by God, who is absolutely good, and, being without jealousy, wished that all things should be like himself. He makes it to consist

of a soul and a body, the former constructed in imitation of the eternal archetypal ideas which now seem to be reduced to three—Existence, Sameness, and Difference.[1] The soul of the world is formed by mixing these three elements together, and the body is an image of the soul. Sameness is represented by the starry sphere rotating on its own axis; Difference by the inclination of the ecliptic to the equator; Existence, perhaps, by the everlasting duration of the heavens. The same analogy extends to the human figure, of which the head is the most essential part, all the rest of the body being merely designed for its support. Plato seems to regard the material world as a sort of machinery designed to meet the necessities of sight and touch, by which the human soul arrives at a knowledge of the eternal order without;—a direct reversal of his earlier theories, according to which matter and sense were mere encumbrances impeding the soul in her efforts after truth.

What remains of the visible world after deducting its ideal elements is pure space. This, which to some seems the clearest of all conceptions, was to Plato one of the obscurest. He can only describe it as the formless substance out of which the four elements, fire, air, water, and earth, are differentiated. It closes the scale of existence and even lies half outside it, just as the Idea of Good in the *Republic* transcends the same scale at the other end. We may conjecture that the two principles are opposed as absolute self-identity and absolute self-separation; the whole intermediate series of forms serving to bridge over the interval between them. It will then be easy to understand how, as Aristotle tells us, Plato finally came to adopt the Pythagorean nomenclature and designated his two generating principles as the monad and the indefinite dyad. Number was formed by their combination, and all other things were made out of number. Aristotle

[1] We may even say that they are reduced to two; for Existence is a product of Sameness and Difference.

complains that the Platonists had turned philosophy into mathematics; and perhaps in the interests of science it was fortunate that the transformation occurred. To suppose that matter could be built up out of geometrical triangles, as Plato teaches in the *Timaeus*, was, no doubt, a highly reprehensible confusion; but that the systematic study of science should be based on mathematics was an equally new and important aperçu. The impulse given to knowledge followed unforeseen directions; and at a later period Plato's true spirit was better represented by Archimêdes and Hipparchus than by Arcesilaus and Carneades.

It is remarkable that the spontaneous development of Greek thought should have led to a form of Theism not unlike that which some persons still imagine was supernaturally revealed to the Hebrew race; for the absence of any connexion between the two is now almost universally admitted. Modern science has taken up the attitude of Laplace towards the hypothesis in question; and those critics who, like Lange, are most imbued with the scientific spirit, feel inclined to regard its adoption by Plato as a retrograde movement. We may to a certain extent agree with them, without admitting that philosophy, as a whole, was injured by departing from the principles of Democritus. An intellectual like an animal organism may sometimes have to choose between retrograde metamorphosis and total extinction. The course of events drove speculation to Athens, where it could only exist on the condition of assuming a theological form. Moreover, action and reaction were equal and contrary. Mythology gained as much as philosophy lost. It was purified from immoral ingredients, and raised to the highest level which supernaturalism is capable of attaining. If the *Republic* was the forerunner of the Catholic Church, the *Timaeus* was the forerunner of the Catholic faith.

IX.

The old age of Plato seems to have been marked by restless activity in more directions than one. He began various works which were never finished, and projected others which were never begun. He became possessed by a devouring zeal for social reform. It seemed to him that nothing was wanting but an enlightened despot to make his ideal State a reality. According to one story, he fancied that such an instrument might be found in the younger Dionysius. If so, his expectations were speedily disappointed. As Hegel acutely observes, only a man of half measures will allow himself to be guided by another; and such a man would lack the energy needed to carry out Plato's scheme.[1] However this may be, the philosopher does not seem to have given up his idea that absolute monarchy was, after all, the government from which most good might be expected. A process of substitution which runs through his whole intellectual evolution was here exemplified for the last time. Just as in his ethical system knowledge, after having been regarded solely as the means for procuring an ulterior end, pleasure, subsequently became an end in itself; just as the interest in knowledge was superseded by a more absorbing interest in the dialectical machinery which was to facilitate its acquisition, and this again by the social re-organisation which was to make education a department of the State; so also the beneficent despotism originally invoked for the purpose of establishing an aristocracy on the new model, came at last to be regarded by Plato as itself the best form of government. Such, at least, seems to be the drift of a remarkable Dialogue called the *Statesman*, which we agree with Prof. Jowett in placing immediatly before the *Laws*. Some have denied its authenticity, and others have placed it very early in the entire series of Platonic compositions. But it contains passages of

[1] *Gesch. d. Ph.*, II., 175.

such blended wit and eloquence that no other man could have written them; and passages so destitute of life that they could only have been written when his system had stiffened into mathematical pedantry and scholastic routine. Moreover, it seems distinctly to anticipate the scheme of detailed legislation which Plato spent his last years in elaborating. After covering with ridicule the notion that a truly competent ruler should ever be hampered by written enactments, the principal spokesman acknowledges that, in the absence of such a ruler, a definite and unalterable code offers the best guarantees for political stability.

This code Plato set himself to construct in his last and longest work, the *Laws*. Less than half of that Dialogue, however, is occupied with the details of legislation. The remaining portions deal with the familiar topics of morality, religion, science, and education. The first book propounds a very curious theory of asceticism, which has not, we believe, been taken up by any subsequent moralist. On the principle of *in vino veritas* Plato proposes that drunkenness should be systematically employed for the purpose of testing self-control. True temperance is not abstinence, but the power of resisting temptation; and we can best discover to what extent any man possesses that power by surprising him when off his guard. If he should be proof against seductive influences even when in his cups, we shall be doubly sure of his constancy at other times. Prof. Jowett rather maliciously suggests that a personal proclivity may have suggested this extraordinary apology for hard drinking. Were it so, we should be reminded of the successive revelations by which indulgences of another kind were permitted to Mohammed, and of the one case in which divorce was sanctioned by Auguste Comte. We should also remember that the Christian Puritanism to which Plato approached so near has always been singularly lenient to this disgraceful vice. But perhaps a somewhat higher order of considerations will help us to a better under-

standing of the paradox. Plato was averse from rejecting any tendency of his age that could possibly be turned to account in his philosophy. Hence, as we have seen, the use which he makes of love, even under its most unlawful forms, in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*. Now, it would appear, from our scanty sources of information, that social festivities, always very popular at Athens, had become the chief interest in life about the time when Plato was composing his *Laws*. According to one graceful legend, the philosopher himself breathed his last at a marriage-feast. It may, therefore, have occurred to him that the prevalent tendency could, like the amorous passions of a former generation, be utilised for moral training and made subservient to the very cause with which, at first sight, it seemed to conflict.

The concessions to common sense and to contemporary schools of thought, already pointed out in those Dialogues which we suppose to have been written after the *Republic*, are still more conspicuous in the *Laws*. We do not mean merely the project of a political constitution avowedly offered as the best possible in existing circumstances, though not the best absolutely; but we mean that there is throughout a desire to present philosophy from its most intelligible, practical, and popular side. The extremely rigorous standard of sexual morality (p. 838) seems, indeed, more akin to modern than to ancient notions, but it was in all probability borrowed from the naturalistic school of ethics, the forerunner of Stoicism; for not only is there a direct appeal to Nature's teaching in that connexion; but throughout the entire work the terms 'nature' and 'naturally' occur with greater frequency, we believe, than in all the rest of Plato's writings put together. When, on the other hand, it is asserted that men can be governed by no other motive than pleasure (p. 663, B), we seem to see in this declaration a concession to the Cyrenaic school, as well as a return to the forsaken standpoint of the *Protagoras*. The increasing influence of Pythagoreanism is shown by

the exaggerated importance attributed to exact numerical determinations. The theory of ideas is, as Prof. Jowett observes, entirely absent, its place being taken by the distinction between mind and matter.[1]

The political constitution and code of laws recommended by Plato to his new city are adapted to a great extent from the older legislation of Athens. As such they have supplied the historians of ancient jurisprudence with some valuable indications. But from a philosophic point of view the general impression produced is wearisome and even offensive. A universal system of espionage is established, and the odious trade of informer receives ample encouragement. Worst of all, it is proposed, in the true spirit of Athenian intolerance, to uphold religious orthodoxy by persecuting laws. Plato had actually come to think that disagreement with the vulgar theology was a folly and a crime. One passage may be quoted as a warning to those who would set early associations to do the work of reason ; and who would overbear new truths by a method which at one time might have been used with fatal effect against their own opinions :—

Who can be calm when he is called upon to prove the existence of the gods? Who can avoid hating and abhorring the men who are and have been the cause of this argument? I speak of those who will not believe the words which they have heard as babes and sucklings from their mothers and nurses, repeated by them both in jest and earnest like charms ; who have also heard and seen their parents offering up sacrifices and prayers—sights and sounds delightful to children—sacrificing, I say, in the most earnest manner on behalf of them and of themselves, and with eager interest talking to the gods and beseeching them as though they were firmly convinced of their existence ; who likewise see and hear the genuflexions and prostrations which are made by Hellenes and barbarians to the rising and setting sun and moon, in all the various turns of good and evil for-

[1] In the work already referred to, Teichmüller advances the startling theory that Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* was published before the completion of the *Laws*, and that Plato took the opportunity thus offered him for replying to the criticisms of his former pupil. (*Lit. Fehden*, pp. 194-226).

tune, not as if they thought that there were no gods, but as if there could be no doubt of their existence, and no suspicion of their non-existence; when men, knowing all these things, despise them on no real grounds, as would be admitted by all who have any particle of intelligence, and when they force us to say what we are now saying, how can any one in gentle terms remonstrate with the like of them, when he has to begin by proving to them the very existence of the gods? [1]

Let it be remembered that the gods of whom Plato is speaking are the sun, moon, and stars; that the atheists whom he denounces only taught what we have long known to be true, which is that those luminaries are no more divine, no more animated, no more capable of accepting our sacrifices or responding to our cries than is the earth on which we tread; and that he attempts to prove the contrary by arguments which, even if they were not inconsistent with all that we know about mechanics, would still be utterly inadequate to the purpose for which they are employed.

Turning back once more from the melancholy decline of a great genius to the splendour of its meridian prime, we will endeavour briefly to recapitulate the achievements which entitle Plato to rank among the five or six greatest Greeks, and among the four or five greatest thinkers of all time. He extended the philosophy of mind until it embraced not only ethics and dialectics but also the study of politics, of religion, of social science, of fine art, of economy, of language, and of education. In other words, he showed how ideas could be applied to life on the most comprehensive scale. Further, he saw that the study of Mind, to be complete, necessitates a knowledge of physical phenomena and of the realities which underlie them; accordingly, he made a return on the objective speculations which had been temporarily abandoned, thus mediating between Socrates and early Greek thought; while on the other hand by his theory of classification he mediated between Socrates and Aristotle. He based physical science

[1] *Legg.*, 887-8. Jowett, V., 456.

on mathematics, thus establishing a method of research and of education which has continued in operation ever since. He sketched the outlines of a new religion in which morality was to be substituted for ritualism, and intelligent imitation of God for blind obedience to his will ; a religion of monotheism, of humanity, of purity, and of immortal life. And he embodied all these lessons in a series of compositions distinguished by such beauty of form that their literary excellence alone would entitle them to rank among the greatest masterpieces that the world has ever seen. He took the recently-created instrument of prose style and at once raised it to the highest pitch of excellence that it has ever attained. Finding the new art already distorted by false taste and overlaid with meretricious ornament, he cleansed and regenerated it in that primal fount of intellectual life, that richest, deepest, purest source of joy, the conversation of enquiring spirits with one another, when they have awakened to the desire for truth and have not learned to despair of its attainment. Thus it was that the philosopher's mastery of expression gave added emphasis to his protest against those who made style a substitute for knowledge, or, by a worse corruption, perverted it into an instrument of profitable wrong. They moved along the surface in a confused world of words, of sensations, and of animal desires ; he penetrated through all those dumb images and blind instincts, to the central verity and supreme end which alone can inform them with meaning, consistency, permanence, and value. To conclude: Plato belonged to that nobly practical school of idealists who master all the details of reality before attempting its reformation, and accomplish their great designs by enlisting and reorganising whatever spontaneous forces are already working in the same direction ; but the fertility of whose own suggestions it needs more than one millennium to exhaust. There is nothing in heaven or earth that was not dreamt of in his philosophy :

some of his dreams have already come true; others still await their fulfilment; and even those which are irreconcilable with the demands of experience will continue to be studied with the interest attaching to every generous and daring adventure, in the spiritual no less than in the secular order of existence.

CHAPTER VI.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ARISTOTLE.

I.

WITHIN the last twelve years several books, both large and small, have appeared, dealing either with the philosophy of Aristotle as a whole, or with the general principles on which it is constructed. The Berlin edition of Aristotle's collected works was supplemented in 1870 by the publication of a magnificent index, filling nearly nine hundred quarto pages, for which we have to thank the learning and industry of Bonitz.[1] Then came the unfinished treatise of George Grote, planned on so vast a scale that it would, if completely carried out, have rivalled the author's *History of Greece* in bulk, and perhaps exceeded the authentic remains of the Stagirite himself. As it is, we have a full account, expository and critical, of the *Organon*, a chapter on the *De Animâ*, and some fragments on other Aristotelian writings, all marked by Grote's wonderful sagacity and good sense. In 1879 a new and greatly enlarged edition brought that portion of Zeller's work on Greek Philosophy which deals with Aristotle and the Peripatetics[2] fully up to the level of its companion volumes; and we are glad to see that, like them, it is shortly to appear in an English dress. The older work of Brandis[3] goes over the same ground, and, though much behind the present state of knowledge, may still be consulted with advantage, on account of its copious and clear analyses of the Aristotelian texts.

[1] *Aristotelis Opera.* Edidit Academia Regia Borussica. Berlin. 1831–70.

[2] *Die Philosophie der Griechen.* Zweiter Theil, Zweite Abtheilung: *Aristoteles u. d. alten Peripatetiker.* By Dr. Eduard Zeller. Leipzig. 1879.

[3] *Aristoteles.* By Christian Aug. Brandis. Berlin. 1853–57.

Together with these ponderous tomes, we have to mention the little work of Sir Alexander Grant,[1] which, although intended primarily for the unlearned, is a real contribution to Aristotelian scholarship, and, probably as such, received the honours of a German translation almost immediately after its first publication. Mr. Edwin Wallace's *Outlines of the Philosophy of Aristotle*[2] is of a different and much less popular character. Originally designed for the use of the author's own pupils, it does for Aristotle's entire system what Trendelenburg has done for his logic, and Ritter and Preller for all Greek philosophy—that is to say, it brings together the most important texts, and accompanies them with a remarkably lucid and interesting interpretation. Finally we have M. Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire's Introduction to his translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, republished in a pocket volume.[3] We can safely recommend it to those who wish to acquire a knowledge of the subject with the least possible expenditure of trouble. The style is delightfully simple, and that the author should write from the standpoint of the French spiritualistic school is not altogether a disadvantage, for that school is partly of Aristotelian origin, and its adherents are, therefore, most likely to reproduce the master's theories with sympathetic appreciation.

In view of such extensive labours, we might almost imagine ourselves transported back to the times when Chaucer could describe a student as being made perfectly happy by having

> 'At his beddes hed
> Twenty bookes clothed in blake or red
> Of Aristotle and his philosophie.'

It seems as if we were witnessing a revival of Mediaevalism

[1] *Aristotle.* By Sir Alexander Grant, Bart., LL.D. Edinburgh and London. 1877.

[2] *Outlines of the Philosophy of Aristotle.* Compiled by Edwin Wallace, M.A. Oxford and London. 1880.

[3] *De la Métaphysique: Introduction à la Métaphysique d'Aristote.* By Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire. Paris. 1879.

under another form; as if, after neo-Gothic architecture, pre-Raphaelitism, and ritualism, we were threatened with a return to the scholastic philosophy which the great scientific reformers of the seventeenth century were supposed to have irrevocably destroyed. And, however chimerical may seem the hopes of such a restoration, we are bound to admit that they do actually exist. One of the most cultivated champions of Ultramontanism in this country, Prof. St. George Mivart, not long ago informed us, at the close of his work on *Contemporary Evolution*, that, 'if metaphysics are possible, there is not, and never was or will be, more than one philosophy which, properly understood, unites all truths and eliminates all errors—*the* Philosophy of *the* Philosopher — Aristotle.' It may be mentioned also, as a symptom of the same movement, that Leo XIII. has recently directed the works of St. Thomas Aquinas to be reprinted for use in Catholic colleges; having, according to the newspapers, laid aside 300,000 *lire* for that purpose—a large sum, considering his present necessities; but not too much for the republication of eighteen folio volumes. Now, it is well known that the philosophy of Aquinas is simply the philosophy of Aristotle, with such omissions and modifications as were necessary in order to piece it on to Christian theology. Hence, in giving his sanction to the teaching of the Angelic Doctor, Leo XIII. indirectly gives it to the source from which so much of that teaching is derived.

It may, perhaps, be considered natural that obsolete authorities should command the assent of a Church whose boast is to maintain the traditions of eighteen centuries intact. But the Aristotelian reaction extends to some who stand altogether aloof from Catholicism. M. Saint-Hilaire speaks in his preface of theology with dislike and suspicion; he has recently held office in a bitterly anti-clerical Government; yet his acceptance of Aristotle's metaphysics is almost unreserved. The same tone is common to all official teaching

in France; and any departure from the strict Peripatetic standard has to be apologised for as if it were a dangerous heresy. On turning to our own country, we find, indeed, a marked change since the time when, according to Mr. Matthew Arnold, Oxford tutors regarded the *Ethics* as absolutely infallible. The great place given to Plato in public instruction, and the rapidly increasing ascendency of evolutionary ideas, are at present enough to hold any rival authority in check; still, not only are the once neglected portions of Aristotle's system beginning to attract fresh attention—which is an altogether commendable movement—but we also find the eminent Oxford teacher, whose work on the subject has been already referred to, expressing himself as follows:—

> We are still anxious to know whether our perception of a real world comes to us by an exercise of thought, or by a simple impression of sense—whether it is the universal that gives the individual reality, or the individual that shapes itself, by some process not explained, into a universal—whether bodily movements are the causal antecedents of mental functions, or mind rather the reality which gives truth to body—whether the highest life is a life of thought or a life of action—whether intellectual also involves moral progress—whether the state is a mere combination for the preservation of goods and property, or a moral organism developing the idea of right. And about these and such like questions Aristotle has still much to tell us. . . . . His theory of a creative reason, fragmentary as that theory is left, is the answer to all materialistic theories of the universe. To Aristotle, as to a subtle Scottish preacher [Principal Caird] 'the real pre-supposition of all knowledge, or the thought which is the *prius* of all things, is not the individual's consciousness of himself as individual, but a thought or self-consciousness which is beyond all individual selves, which is the unity of all individual selves and their objects, of all thinkers and all objects of all thought.'[1]

Our critics are not content with bringing up Aristotle as an authority on the metaphysical controversies of the present day, and reading into him theories of which he never dreamed:

[1] Wallace's *Outlines*, preface, pp. vi–viii.

they proceed to credit him with modern opinions which he would have emphatically repudiated, and modern methods which directly reverse his scientific teaching. Thus Sir A. Grant takes advantage of an ambiguity in the word Matter, as used respectively by Aristotle and by contemporary writers, to claim his support for the peculiar theories of Prof. Ferrier; although the Stagirite has recorded his belief in the reality and independence of material objects (if not of what he called matter) with a positiveness which one would have thought left no possibility of misunderstanding him.[1] And Mr. Wallace says that Aristotle 'recognises the genesis of things by evolution and development;' a statement which, standing where it does, and with no more qualifications than are added to it, would make any reader not versed in the subject think of the Stagirite rather as a forerunner of Mr. Darwin and Mr. Herbert Spencer, than as the intellectua ancestor of their opponents; while, on a subsequent occasion, he quotes a passage about the variations of plants under domestication, from a work considered to be un-Aristotelian by the best critics, apparently with no other object than that of finding a piece of Darwinism in his author.[2]

In Germany, Neo-Aristotelianism has already lived out the appointed term of all such movements; having, we believe, been brought into fashion by Trendelenburg about forty years ago. Since then, the Aristotelian system in all its branches has been studied with such profound scholarship that any illusions respecting its value for our present needs must, by this time, have been completely dissipated; while the Hegelian dialectic, which it was originally intended to combat, no longer requires a counterbalance, having been entirely driven from German university teaching. Moreover, Lange's famous *History of Materialism* has dealt a staggering blow to the reputation of Aristotle, not merely in itself, but relatively to the services of early Greek thought; although

[1] As will be shown in the next chapter.

[2] *Outlines*, pp. 29 and 38.

Lange goes too far into the opposite extreme when exalting Democritus at his expense.[1] We have to complain, however, that Zeller and other historians of Greek philosophy start with an invariable prejudice in favour of the later speculators as against the earlier, and especially in favour of Aristotle as against all his predecessors, even Plato included, which leads them to slur over his weak points, and to bring out his excellencies into disproportionate relief.[2]

It is evident, then, that Aristotle cannot be approached with the same perfect dispassionateness as the other great thinkers of antiquity. He is, if not a living force, still a force which must be reckoned with in contemporary controversy. His admirers persist in making an authority of him, or at least of quoting him in behalf of their own favourite convictions. We are, therefore, bound to sift his claims with a severity which would not be altogether gracious in a purely historical review. At the same time it is hoped that historical justice will not lose, but gain, by such a procedure. We shall be the better able to understand what Aristotle was, after first showing what he neither was nor could be. And the utility of our investigations will be still further enhanced if we can show that he represents a fixed type regularly recurring in the revolutions of thought.

II.

Personally, we know more about Aristotle than about any other Greek philosopher of the classic period; but what we know does not amount to much. It is little more than the skeleton of a life, a bald enumeration of names and dates and places, with a few more or less doubtful anecdotes interspersed. These we shall now relate, together with whatever inferences the facts seem to warrant. Aristotle was born 384 B.C., at Stageira, a Greek colony in Thrace. It is remarkable that every single Greek thinker of note, Socrates and Plato alone

[1] Zeller, *op. cit.*, p. 513. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 407.

excepted, came from the confines of Hellenedom and barbarism. It has been conjectured by Auguste Comte, we know not with how much reason, that religious traditions were weaker in the colonies than in the parent states, and thus allowed freer play to independent speculation. Perhaps, also, the accumulation of wealth was more rapid, thus affording greater leisure for thought; while the pettiness of political life liberated a fund of intellectual energy, which in more powerful communities might have been devoted to the service of the State. Left an orphan in early youth, Aristotle was brought up by one Proxenus, to whose son, Nicanor, he afterwards repaid the debt of gratitude. In his eighteenth year he settled at Athens, and attended the school of Plato until the death of that philosopher twenty years afterwards. It is not clear whether the younger thinker was quite conscious of his vast intellectual debt to the elder, and he continually emphasises the points on which they differ; but personally his feeling towards the master was one of deep reverence and affection. In some beautiful lines, still extant, he speaks of 'an altar of solemn friendship dedicated to one of whom the bad should not speak even in praise; who alone, or who first among mortals, proved by his own life and by his system, that goodness and happiness go hand in hand;' and it is generally agreed that the reference can only be to Plato. Again, in his *Ethics*, Aristotle expresses reluctance to criticise the ideal theory, because it was held by dear friends of his own; adding the memorable declaration, that to a philosopher truth should be dearer still. What opinion Plato formed of his most illustrious pupil is less certain. According to one tradition, he surnamed Aristotle the Nous of his school. It could, indeed, hardly escape so penetrating an observer that the omnivorous appetite for knowledge, which he regarded as most especially characteristic of the philosophic temperament, possessed this young learner to a degree never before paralleled among the sons of men. He may,

however, have considered that the Stagirite's method of acquiring knowledge was unfavourable to its fresh and vivid apprehension. An expression has been preserved which can hardly be other than genuine, so distinguished is it by that delicate mixture of compliment and satire in which Plato particularly excelled. He is said to have called Aristotle's house the 'house of the reader.' The author of the *Phaedrus*, himself a tolerably voluminous writer, was, like Carlyle, not an admirer of literature. Probably it occurred to him that a philosophical student, who had the privilege of listening to his own lectures, might do better than shut himself up with a heap of manuscripts, away from the human inspiration of social intercourse, and the divine inspiration of solitary thought. We moderns have no reason to regret a habit which has made Aristotle's writings a storehouse of ancient speculations; but from a scientific, no less than from an artistic point of view, those works are overloaded with criticisms of earlier opinions, some of them quite undeserving of serious discussion.

Philosophy was no sooner domiciled at Athens than its professors came in for their full share of the scurrilous personalities which seem to have formed the staple of conversation in that enlightened capital. Aristotle, himself a trenchant and sometimes a bitterly scornful controversialist, did not escape; and some of the censures passed on him were, rightly or wrongly, attributed to Plato. The Stagirite, who had been brought up at or near the Macedonian Court, and had inherited considerable means, was, if report speaks truly, somewhat foppish in his dress, and luxurious, if not dissipated in his habits. It would not be surprising if one who was left his own master at so early an age had at first exceeded the limits of that moderation which he afterwards inculcated as the golden rule of morals; but the charge of extravagance was such a stock accusation at Athens, where the continued influence of country life seems to have bred a prejudice in favour

of parsimony, that it may be taken almost as an exoneration from graver imputations; and, perhaps, an admonition from Plato, if any was needed, sufficed to check his disciple's ambition for figuring as a man of fashion.

We cannot tell to what extent the divergences which afterwards made Plato and Aristotle pass for types of the most extreme intellectual opposition were already manifested during their personal intercourse.[1] The tradition is that the teacher compared his pupil to a foal that kicks his mother after draining her dry. There is a certain rough truth as well as rough wit about the remark; but the author of the *Parmenides* could hardly have been much affected by criticisms on the ideal theory which he had himself reasoned out with equal candour and acuteness; and if, as we sometimes feel tempted to conjecture, those criticisms were first suggested to him by Aristotle in conversation, it will be still more evident that they were received without offence.[2]

In some respects, Aristotle began not only as a disciple but as a champion of Platonism. On the popular side, that doctrine was distinguished by its essentially religious character, and by its opposition to the rhetorical training then in vogue. Now, Aristotle's dialogues, of which only a few fragments have been preserved, contained elegant arguments in favour of a creative First Cause, and of human immortality; although in the writings which embody his maturer views, the first of these theories is considerably modified, and the second is absolutely rejected. Further, we are informed that Aristotle expressed himself in terms of rather violent contempt for Isocrates, the greatest living professor of declamation; and

[1] Written before the appearance of Teichmüller's *Lit. Fehden* (already referred to in the preceding chapter).

[2] Zeller's opinion that all the Platonic Dialogues except the *Laws* were composed before Aristotle's arrival in Athens, does not seem to be supported by any satisfactory evidence. [Since the above was first published I have found that a similar view of the *Parmenides* had already been maintained by Tocco (*Ricerche Platoniche*, p. 105); and afterwards, but independently, by Teichmüller (*Neue Studien*, III. 363). See Chiapelli, *Della Interpretazione panteistica di Platone*, p. 152.]

opened an opposition school of his own. This step has, curiously enough, been adduced as a further proof of disagreement with Plato, who, it is said, objected to all rhetorical teaching whatever. It seems to us that what he condemned was rather the method and aim of the then fashionable rhetoric; and a considerable portion of his *Phaedrus* is devoted to proving how much more effectually persuasion might be produced by the combined application of dialectics and psychology to oratory. Now, this is precisely what Aristotle afterwards attempted to work out in the treatise on Rhetoric still preserved among his writings; and we may safely assume that his earlier lectures at Athens were composed on the same principle.

In 347 Plato died, leaving his nephew Speusippus to succeed him in the headship of the Academy. Aristotle then left Athens, accompanied by another Platonist, Xenocrates, a circumstance tending to prove that his relations with the school continued to be of a cordial character. The two settled in Atarneus, at the invitation of its tyrant Hermeias, an old fellow-student from the Academy. Hermeias was a eunuch who had risen from the position of a slave to that of vizier, and then, after his master's death, to the possession of supreme power. Three years subsequently a still more abrupt turn of fortune brought his adventurous career to a close. Like Polycrates, he was treacherously seized and crucified by order of the Persian Government. Aristotle, who had married Pythias, his deceased patron's niece, fled with her to Mitylênê. Always grateful, and singularly enthusiastic in his attachments, he celebrated the memory of Hermeias in a manner which gave great offence to the religious sentiment of Hellas, by dedicating a statue to him at Delphi, and composing an elegy, still extant, in which he compares the eunuch-despot to Heracles, the Dioscuri, Achilles, and Ajax; and promises him immortality from the Muses in honour of Xenian Zeus.

When we next hear of Aristotle he is at the Macedonian

Court,[1] acting as tutor to Alexander, the future conqueror of Asia, who remained under his charge between the ages of thirteen and sixteen years. The philosopher is more likely to have obtained this appointment by Court interest—his father was Court-physician to Alexander's grandfather, Amyntas—than by his reputation, which could hardly have been made until several years afterwards. Much has been made of a connexion which, although it did not last very long, appeals strongly to the imagination, and opens a large field for surmise. The greatest speculative and the greatest practical genius of that age—some might say of all ages—could not, one would think, come into such close contact without leaving a deep impression on each other. Accordingly, the philosopher is supposed to have prepared the hero for his future destinies. Milton has told us how Aristotle 'bred great Alexander to subdue the world.' Hegel tells us that this was done by giving him the consciousness of himself, the full assurance of his own powers; for which purpose, it seems, the infinite daring of thought was required; and he observes that the result is a refutation of the silly talk about the practical inutility of philosophy.[2] It would be unfortunate if philosophy had no better testimonial to show for herself than the character of Alexander. It is not the least merit of Grote's History to have brought out in full relief the savage traits by which his conduct was marked from first to last. Arrogant, drunken, cruel, vindictive, and grossly superstitious, he united the vices of a Highland chieftain to the frenzy of an Oriental despot. No man ever stood further from the gravity, the gentleness, the moderation—in a word, the Sôphrosynê of a true Hellenic hero. The time came when Aristotle himself would have run the most imminent personal risk had he been within the tyrant's immediate grasp. His

[1] Teichmüller infers, from certain expressions in the *Panathenaicus* of Isocrates, that Aristotle had returned from Mitylênê to Athens and resumed his former position as a teacher of rhetoric when the summons to Pella reached him. (*Lit. Fehden*, 261.)

[2] *Gesch. d. Phil.*, II., 302.

nephew, Callisthenes, had incurred deep displeasure by protesting against the servile adulation, or rather idolatry, which Alexander exacted from his attendants. A charge of conspiracy was trumped up against him, and even the exculpatory evidence, taken under torture, of his alleged accomplices did not save him. 'I will punish the sophist,' wrote Alexander, 'and those who sent him out.' It was understood that his old tutor was included in the threat. Fortunately, as Grote observes, Aristotle was not at Ecbatana but at Athens; he therefore escaped the fate of Callisthenes, who suffered death in circumstances, according to some accounts, of great atrocity.

Zeller finds several good qualities in Alexander—precocious statesmanship, zeal for the extension of Hellenic civilisation, long-continued self-restraint under almost irresistible temptation, and through all his subsequent aberrations a nobility, a moral purity, a humanity, and a culture, which raise him above every other great conqueror; and these he attributes, in no small degree, to the fostering care of Aristotle;[1] yet, with the exception of moral purity, which was probably an affair of temperament, and has been remarked to an equal extent in other men of the same general character, he was surpassed, in all these respects, by Julius Caesar; while the ruthless vindictiveness, which was his worst passion, exhibited itself at the very beginning of his reign by the destruction of Thebes. A varnish of literary culture he undoubtedly had, and for this Aristotle may be thanked; but any ordinary sophist would probably have effected as much. As to the Hellenising of Western Asia, this, according to Grote, was the work, not of Alexander, but of the Diadochi after him.

The profit reaped by Aristotle from the connexion seems equally doubtful. Tradition tells us that enormous sums of money were spent in aid of his scientific researches, and a whole army of crown servants deputed to collect information

[1] Zeller, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

bearing on his zoological studies. Modern explorations, however, have proved that the conquests of Alexander, at least, did not, as has been pretended, supply him with any new specimens; nor does the knowledge contained in his extant treatises exceed what could be obtained either by his own observations or by private enquiries. At the same time we may suppose that his services were handsomely rewarded, and that his official position at the Macedonian Court gave him numerous opportunities for conversing with the grooms, huntsmen, shepherds, fishermen, and others, from whom most of what he tells us about the habits of animals was learned. In connexion with the favour enjoyed by Aristotle, it must be mentioned as a fresh proof of his amiable character, that he obtained the restoration of Stageira, which had been ruthlessly destroyed by Philip, together with the other Greek cities of the Chalcidic peninsula.

Two passages in Aristotle's writings have been supposed to give evidence of his admiration for Alexander. One is the description of the magnanimous man in the *Ethics*. The other is a reference in the *Politics* to an ideal hero, whose virtue raises him so high above the common run of mortals that their duty is to obey him as if he were a god. But the magnanimous man embodies a grave and stately type of character quite unlike the chivalrous, impulsive theatrical nature of Alexander,[1] while probably not unfrequent among real Hellenes; and the god-like statesman of the *Politics* is spoken of rather as an unattainable ideal than as a contemporary fact. On the whole, then, we must conclude that the intercourse between these two extraordinary spirits has left no distinct trace on the actions of the one or on the thoughts of the other.

On Alexander's departure for the East, Aristotle returned to Athens, where he now placed himself at the head of a new philosophical school. The ensuing period of thirteen years

[1] Cf. Teichmüller, *Lit. Fehden*, 192.

was fully occupied by the delivery of public lectures, and by the composition of those encyclopaedic writings which will preserve his memory for ever, along, perhaps, with many others which have not survived. Like Anaxagoras, he was not allowed to end his days in the city of his adoption. His youthful attacks on Isocrates had probably made him many enemies among that rhetor's pupils. It is supposed by Grote, but warmly disputed by Zeller, that his trenchant criticisms on Plato had excited a similar animosity among the sectaries of the Academy.[1] Anyhow, circumstances had unavoidably associated him with the detested Macedonian party, although his position, as a metic, or resident alien, debarred him from taking any active part in politics. With Alexander's death the storm broke loose. A charge was trumped up against Aristotle, on the strength of his unlucky poem in honour of Hermeias, which was described as an insult to religion. That such an accusation should be chosen is characteristic of Athenian bigotry, even should there be no truth in the story that certain philosophical opinions of his were likewise singled out for prosecution. Before the case came on for trial, Aristotle availed himself of the usual privilege allowed on such occasions, and withdrew to Chalcis, in order, as he said, that the Athenians need not sin a second time against philosophy. But his constitution, naturally a feeble one, was nearly worn out. A year afterwards he succumbed to a stomach complaint, aggravated, if not produced, by incessant mental application. His contemporary, Demosthenes, perished about the same time, and at the same age, sixty-two. Within little more than a twelvemonth the world had lost its three greatest men; and after three centuries of uninterrupted glory, Hellas was left unrepresented by a single individual of commanding genius.

We are told that when his end began to approach, the dying philosopher was pressed to choose a successor in the headship of the School. The manner in which he did this is

[1] Zeller, p. 38.

characteristic of his singular gentleness and unwillingness to give offence. It was understood that the choice must lie between his two most distinguished pupils, Theophrastus of Lesbos, and Eudêmus of Rhodes. Aristotle asked for specimens of the wine grown in those islands. He first essayed the Rhodian vintage, and praised it highly, but remarked after tasting the other, 'The Lesbian is sweeter,' thus revealing his preference for Theophrastus, who accordingly reigned over the Lyceum in his stead.[1]

A document purporting to be Aristotle's will has been preserved by Diogenes Laertius, and although some objections to its authenticity have been raised by Sir A. Grant, they have, in our opinion, been successfully rebutted by Zeller.[2] The philosopher's testamentary dispositions give one more proof of his thoughtful consideration for the welfare of those about him, and his devotion to the memory of departed friends. Careful provision is made for the guardianship of his youthful children, and for the comfort of his second wife, Herpyllis, who, he says, had 'been good to' him. Certain slaves, specified by name, are to be emancipated, and to receive legacies. None of the young slaves who waited on him are to be sold, and on growing up they are to be set free 'if they deserve it.' The bones of his first wife, Pythias, are, as she herself desired, to be laid by his. Monuments are to be erected in memory of his mother, and of certain friends, particularly Proxenus, who had been Aristotle's guardian, and his family.

In person Aristotle resembled the delicate student of modern times rather than the athletic figures of his predecessors. He was not a soldier like Socrates, nor a gymnast like Plato. To judge from several allusions in his works, he put great faith in walking as a preservative of health—even when lecturing he liked to pace up and down a shady avenue. And, probably, a constitutional was the severest exercise that

[1] Ritter and Preller, *Hist. Ph.*, p. 329. [2] Zeller, p. 41, *note* 2.

he ever took. He spoke with a sort of lisp, and the expression of his mouth is said to have been sarcastic ; but the traits preserved to us in marble tell only of meditation, and perhaps of pain. A free-spoken and fearless critic, he was not over-sensitive on his own account. When told that somebody had been abusing him in his absence, the philosopher replied, 'He may beat me, too, if he likes—in my absence.' He might be abused, even in his own presence, without departing from the same attitude of calm disdain, much to the disappointment of his petulant assailants. His equanimity was but slightly disturbed by more public and substantial affronts. When certain honorary distinctions, conferred on him by a popular vote at Delphi, were withdrawn, probably on the occasion of his flight from Athens, he remarked with his usual studied moderation, that, while not entirely indifferent, he did not feel very deeply concerned ; a trait which illustrates the character of the 'magnanimous man' far better than anything related of Alexander. Two other sayings have an almost Christian tone ; when asked how we should treat our friends, he replied, 'As we should wish them to treat us ;' and on being reproached with wasting his bounty on an unworthy object, he observed, 'it was not the person, but the human being that I pitied.'[1]

Still, taking it altogether, the life of Aristotle gives one the impression of something rather desultory and dependent, not proudly self-determined, like the lives of the thinkers who went before him. We are reminded of the fresh starts and the appeals to authority so frequent in his writings. He is first detained at Athens twenty years by the attraction of Plato ; and no sooner is Plato gone, than he falls under the influence of an entirely different character—Hermeias. Even when his services are no longer needed he lingers near the Macedonian Court, until Alexander's departure leaves him once more without a patron. The most dignified period of

[1] Diog. L., V., 17-21.

his whole career is that during which he presided over the Peripatetic School; but he owes this position to foreign influence, and loses it with the temporary revival of Greek liberty. A longer life would probably have seen him return to Athens in the train of his last patron Antipater, whom, as it was, he appointed executor to his will. This was just the sort of character to lay great stress on the evidentiary value of sensation and popular opinion. It was also the character of a conservative who was likely to believe that things had always been very much what they were in his time, and would continue to remain so ever afterwards. Aristotle was not the man to imagine that the present order of nature had sprung out of a widely different order in the remote past, nor to encourage such speculations when they were offered to him by others. He would not readily believe that phenomena, as he knew them, rested on a reality which could neither be seen nor felt. Nor, finally, could he divine the movements which were slowly undermining the society in which he lived, still less construct an ideal polity for its reorganisation on a higher and broader basis. And here we at once become conscious of the chief difference separating him from his master, Plato.

III.

It is an often-quoted observation of Friedrich Schlegel's that every man is born either a Platonist or an Aristotelian. If we narrow the remark to the only class which, perhaps, its author recognised as human beings, namely, all thinking men, it will be found to contain a certain amount of truth, though probably not what Schlegel intended; at any rate something requiring to be supplemented by other truths before its full meaning can be understood. The common opinion seems to be that Plato was a transcendentalist, while Aristotle was an experientialist; and that this constitutes the most typical distinction between them. It would, however, be a mistake to

suppose that the *à priori* and *à posteriori* methods were marked off with such definiteness in Plato's time as to render possible a choice between them. The opposition was not between general propositions and particular facts, but between the most comprehensive and the most limited notions. It was as if the question were now to be raised whether we should begin to teach physiology by at once dividing the organic from the inorganic world, or by directing the learner's attention to some one vital act. Now, we are expressly told that Plato hesitated between these two methods; and in his Dialogues, at least, we find the easier and more popular one employed by preference. It is true that he often appeals to wide principles which do not rest on an adequate basis of experimental evidence; but Aristotle does so also, more frequently even, and, as the event proved, with more fatal injury to the advance of knowledge. In his *Rhetoric* he even goes beyond Plato, constructing the entire art from the general principles of dialectics, psychology, and ethics, without any reference, except for the sake of illustration, to existing models of eloquence.

According to Sir A. Grant, it is by the mystical and poetical side of his nature that Plato differs from Aristotle. The one 'aspired to a truth above the truth of scientific knowledge'; the other to 'methodised experience and the definite.'[1] Now, setting aside the question whether there is any truth above the truth of scientific knowledge, we doubt very much whether Plato believed in its existence. He held that the most valuable truth was that which could be imparted to others by a process even more rigorous than mathematical reasoning; and there was no reality, however transcendent, that he did not hope to bring within the grasp of a dialectic without which even the meanest could not be understood. He did, indeed, believe that, so far, the best and wisest of mankind had owed much more to a divinely implanted instinct than to any conscious chain of reflection; but he distinctly

[1] Grant's *Aristotle*, p. 7.

asserted the inferiority of such guidance to the light of scientific knowledge, if this could be obtained, as he hoped that it could. On the other hand, Aristotle was probably superior to Plato as a poet; and in speaking about the highest realities he uses language which, though less rich and ornate than his master's, is not inferior to it in force and fervour; while his metaphysical theories contain a large element of what would now be considered mysticism, that is, he often sees evidence of purpose and animation where they do not really exist. His advantage in definiteness is, of course, indisputable, but this was, perhaps, because he came after Plato and profited by his lessons.

Yet there *was* a difference between them, marking off each as the head of a whole School much wider than the Academy or the Lyceum; a difference which we can best express by saying that Plato was pre-eminently a practical, Aristotle pre-eminently a speculative genius. The object of the one was to reorganise all human life, that of the other to reorganise all human knowledge. Had the one lived earlier, he would more probably have been a great statesman or a great general than a great writer; the other would at no time have been anything but a philosopher, a mathematician, or a historian. Even from birth they seemed to be respectively marked out for an active and for a contemplative life: the one, a citizen of the foremost State in Hellas, sprung from a family in which political ambition was hereditary, himself strong, beautiful, fascinating, eloquent, and gifted with the keenest insight into men's capacities and motives; the other a Stagirite and an Asclepiad, that is to say, without opportunities for a public career, and possessing a hereditary aptitude for anatomy and natural history, fitted by his insignificant person and delicate constitution for sedentary pursuits, and better able to acquire a knowledge even of human nature from books than from a living converse with men and affairs. Of course, we are not for a moment denying to Plato a fore-

most place among the masters of those who know; he embraced all the science of his age, and to a great extent marked out the course which the science of future ages was to pursue; nevertheless, for him, knowledge was not so much an end in itself as a means for the attainment of other ends, among which the preservation of the State seems to have been, in his eyes, the most important. Aristotle, on the other hand, after declaring happiness to be the supreme end, defines it as an energising of man's highest nature, which again he identifies with the reasoning process or cognition in its purest form.

The same fundamental difference comes out strongly in their respective theologies. Plato starts with the conception that God is good, and being good wishes everything to resemble himself; an assumption from which the divine origin and providential government of the world are deduced. Aristotle thinks of God as exclusively occupied in self-contemplation, and only acting on Nature through the love which his perfection inspires. If, further, we consider in what relation the two philosophies stand to ethics, we shall find that, to Plato, its problems were the most pressing of any, that they haunted him through his whole life, and that he made contributions of extraordinary value towards their solution; while to Aristotle, it was merely a branch of natural history, a study of the different types of character to be met with in Greek society, without the faintest perception that conduct required to be set on a wider and firmer basis than the conventional standards of his age. Hence it is that, in reading Plato, we are perpetually reminded of the controversies still raging among ourselves. He gives us an exposition, to which nothing has ever been added, of the theory now known as Egoistic Hedonism; he afterwards abandons that theory, and passes on to the social side of conduct, the necessity of justice, the relation of private to public interest, the bearing of religion, education, and social institutions on morality, along with other kindred topics, which need not be further specified, as

they have been discussed with sufficient fulness in the preceding chapter. Aristotle, on the contrary, takes us back into old Greek life as it was before the days of Socrates, noticing the theories of that great reformer only that he may reject them in favour of a narrow, common-sense standard. Virtuous conduct, he tells us, consists in choosing a mean between two extremes. If we ask how the proper mean is to be discovered, he refers us to a faculty called *φρόνησις*, or practical reason; but on further enquiry it turns out that this faculty is possessed by none who are not already virtuous. To the question, How are men made moral? he answers, By acquiring moral habits; which amounts to little more than a restatement of the problem, or, at any rate, suggests another more difficult question—How are good habits acquired?

An answer might conceivably have been supplied, had Aristotle been enable to complete that sketch of an ideal State which was originally intended to form part of his *Politics*. But the philosopher evidently found that to do so was beyond his powers. If the seventh and eighth books of that treatise, which contain the fragmentary attempt in question, had originally occupied the place where they now stand in our manuscripts, it might have been supposed that Aristotle's labours were interrupted by death. Modern criticism has shown, however, that they should follow immediately after the first three books, and that the author broke off, almost at the beginning of his ideal polity, to take up the much more congenial task of analysing and criticising the actually existing Hellenic constitutions. But the little that he has done proves him to have been profoundly unfitted for the task of a practical reformer. What few actual recommendations it contains are a compromise—somewhat in the spirit of Plato's *Laws*—between the *Republic* and real life. The rest is what he never fails to give us—a mass of details about matters of fact, and a summary of his speculative ethics, along with counsels of moderation in the spirit of his practical ethics; but not one

practical principle of any value, not one remark to show that he understood what direction history was taking, or that he had mastered the elements of social reform as set forth in Plato's works. The progressive specialisation of political functions; the necessity of a spiritual power; the formation of a trained standing army; the admission of women to public employments; the elevation of the whole race by artificial selection; the radical reform of religion; the reconstitution of education, both literary and scientific, the redistribution of property; the enactment of a new code; the use of public opinion as an instrument of moralisation;—these are the ideas which still agitate the minds of men, and they are also the ideas of the *Republic*, the *Statesman*, and the *Laws*. Aristotle, on the other hand, occupies himself chiefly with discussing how far a city should be built from the sea, whether it should be fortified; how its citizens should *not* be employed; when people should *not* marry; what children should *not* be permitted to see; and what music they should *not* be taught. Apart from his enthusiasm for philosophy, there is nothing generous, nothing large-minded, nothing inspiring. The territory of the city is to be self-sufficing, that it may be isolated from other States; the citizens are to keep aloof from all industrial occupations; science is put out of relation to the material well-being of mankind. It was, in short, to be a city where every gentleman should hold an idle fellowship; a city where Aristotle could live without molestation, and in the enjoyment of congenial friendships; just as the God of his system was a still higher Aristotle, perpetually engaged in the study of formal logic.

Even in his much-admired criticisms on the actually existing types of government our philosopher shows practical weakness and vacillation of character. There is a good word for them all—for monarchy, for aristocracy, for middle-class rule, and even for pure democracy.[1] The fifth book, treating of

[1] We think, however, that Mr. Edwin Wallace has overstated the case, when

political revolutions, is unquestionably the ablest and most interesting in the whole work; but when Aristotle quits the domain of natural history for that of practical suggestions, with a view to obviate the dangers pointed out, he can think of nothing better than the old advice—to be moderate, even where the constitutions which moderation is to preserve are by their very nature so excessive that their readjustment and equilibration would be equivalent to their destruction. And in fact, Aristotle's proposals amount to this—that government by the middle class should be established wherever the ideal aristocracy of education is impracticable; or else a government in which the class interests of rich and poor should be so nicely balanced as to obviate the danger of oligarchic or democratic injustice. His error lay in not perceiving that the only possible means of securing such a happy mean was to break through the narrow circle of Greek city life; to continue the process which had united families into villages, and villages into towns; to confederate groups of cities into larger

he makes Aristotle say that 'democracy is not unlikely with the spread of population to become the ultimate form of government; and may be anticipated without dread by considering that the *collective* voice of a people is as likely to be sound in state administration as in criticisms on art,' pp. 57–8. In the first place, the expressions of opinion which are brought together in Mr. Wallace's summary are separated in the original text by a considerable interval—an important circumstance when we are dealing with so inconsistent a writer; then what Aristotle says about the collective wisdom of the people, besides being advanced with extreme hesitation, is not a reassurance against any danger to be dreaded from their supremacy, but an answer to the argument that the few had a natural right to political power from their greater wealth and better education; the whole question being, in this connexion, one of political justice, not of political expediency; finally, not only is 'ultimate' form of government' a very strong rendering of the Greek words, but what Aristotle says on the subject in his third book is virtually retracted in the fifth, where oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny are regarded as succeeding each other in any order indifferently, and Plato (or the Platonic Socrates) is censured for assuming a constant sequence of revolutions. The explanation of this change seems to be that when Aristotle wrote his third book he was only acquainted with the history of Athens and a few other of the greater states, but that subsequently a vast collection of facts bearing on the subject came to his knowledge, showing that each form of government embraced more varieties and admitted of more mutations than he had been originally aware of; and this led to a complete recast of his opinions.

states ; and so, by striking an average of different inequalities, to minimise the risk of those incessant revolutions which had hitherto secured the temporary triumph of alternate factions at the expense of their common interest. And, in fact, the spontaneous process of aggregation, which Aristotle did not foresee, has alone sufficed to remedy the evils which he saw, but could not devise any effectual means of curing, and at the same time has bred new evils of which his diagnosis naturally took no account.

But, if this be so, it follows that Mr. Edwin Wallace's appeal to Aristotle as an authority worth consulting on our present social difficulties cannot be upheld. Take the question quoted by Mr. Wallace himself: 'Whether the State is a mere combination for the preservation of goods and property, or a moral organism developing the idea of right?' Aristotle certainly held very strong opinions in favour of State interference with education and private morality, if that is what the second alternative implies ; but does it follow that he would agree with those who advocate a similar supervision at the present day? By no means ; because experience has shown that in enormous industrial societies like ours, protection is attended with difficulties and dangers which he could no more foresee than he could foresee the discoveries on which our physical science is based. Or, returning for a moment to ethics, let us take another of Mr. Wallace's problems: 'Whether intellectual also involves moral progress?' What possible light can be thrown on it by Aristotle's exposure of the powerlessness of right knowledge to make an individual virtuous, when writers like Buckle have transferred the whole question from a particular to a general ground ; from the conduct of individuals to the conduct of men acting in large masses, and over vast periods of time? Or, finally, take the question which forms a point of junction between Aristotle's ethics and his politics: 'Whether the highest life is a life of thought or a life of action?' Of what importance is his

decision to us, who attend far more to the social than to the individual consequences of actions; who have learned to take into account the emotional element of happiness, which Aristotle neglected; who are uninfluenced by his appeal to the blissful theorising of gods in whom we do not believe; for whom, finally, experience has altogether broken down the antithesis between knowledge and practice, by showing that speculative ideas may revolutionise the whole of life? Aristotle is an interesting historical study; but we are as far beyond him in social as in physical science.

IV.

On turning to Aristotle's *Rhetoric* we find that, from a practical point of view, his failure here is, if possible, still more complete. This treatise contains, as we have already observed, an immense mass of more or less valuable information on the subject of psychology, ethics, and dialectic, but gives exceedingly little advice about the very essence of rhetoric as an art, which is to say whatever you have to say in the most telling manner, by the arrangement of topics and arguments, by the use of illustrations, and by the choice of language; and that little is to be found in the third book, the genuineness of which is open to very grave suspicion. It may be doubted whether any orator or critic of oratory was ever benefited in the slightest degree by the study of Aristotle's rules. His collections of scientific data add nothing to our knowledge, but only throw common experience into abstract formulas; and even as a body of memoranda they would be useless, for no memory could contain them, or if any man could remember them he would have intellect enough not to require them.[1] The professional teachers whom

[1] Many of the topics noted are not only trite enough, but have no possible bearing on the subject under which they stand. For instance, in discussing judicial eloquence Aristotle goes into the motives for committing crime; among

Aristotle so heartily despised seem to have followed a much more effectual method than his ; they gave their pupils ready-made speeches to analyse and learn by heart, rightly trusting to the imitative instinct to do the rest. He compares them to a master who should teach his apprentices how to make shoes by supplying them with a great variety of ready-made pairs. But this would be a much better plan than to give them an elaborate lecture on the anatomy of the foot, with a full enumeration of its bones, muscles, tendons, nerves, and blood-vessels, which is the most appropriate parallel to *his* system of instruction.

The *Poetics* of Aristotle contains some hints on the subject of composition which entitle it to be mentioned in the present connexion. The deficiencies, even from a purely theoretical point of view, of this work, once pronounced infallible, have at last become so obvious that elaborate hypotheses have been constructed, according to which the recension handed down to us is a mere mutilated extract from the original treatise. Enough, however, remains to convince us that poetry was not, any more than eloquence, a subject with which Aristotle was fitted to cope. He begins by defining it, in common with all other art, as an imitation. Here, we at once recognise the spirit of a philosophy, the whole power and interest of which lay in knowledge ; and, in fact, he tells us that the love of art is derived from the love of knowledge. But the truth seems to be that aesthetic enjoyment is due to an ideal exercise of our faculties, among which the power of perceiving identities is sometimes, though not always, included. That the materials of which every artistic creation is composed are taken from the world of our experience makes no difference ; for it is by the new forms in which they are arranged that we are interested, not because we remember having met them in

these are pleasurable feelings of every kind, including the remembrance of past trouble. Even the hero of a spasmodic tragedy would hardly have committed an offence for the purpose of procuring himself this form of experience.

some natural combination already. Aristotle could not help seeing that this was true in the case of music at least; and he can only save his principle by treating musical effects as representations of passions in the soul. To say, however, that musical pleasure arises from a perception of resemblance between certain sounds and the emotions with which they are associated, would be an extremely forced interpretation; the pleasure is due rather to a sympathetic participation in the emotion itself. And when Aristotle goes on to tell us that the characters imitated in epic and dramatic poetry may be either better or worse than in ordinary life, he is obviously admitting other aesthetic motives not accounted for by his general theory. If, on the other hand, we start with ideal energising as the secret of aesthetic emotion, we can easily understand how an imaginary exaltation of our faculties is yielded by the spectacle of something either rising above, or falling below, the level on which we stand. In the one case we become momentarily invested with the strength put into action before our eyes; in the other, the consciousness of our own superiority amounts to a fund of reserve power, which *not* being put into action, is entirely available for ideal enjoyment. And, if this be the correct view, it will follow that Aristotle was quite wrong when he declared the plot to be more important than the characters of a drama. The reason given for his preference is, even on the principles of his own philosophy, a bad one. He says that there can be plot without character-drawing, but never character-drawing without plot. Yet he has taught us elsewhere that the human soul is of more value than the physical organism on which its existence depends. This very parallel suggests itself to him in his *Poetics*; but, by an almost inconceivable misjudgment, it is the plot which he likens to the soul of the piece, whereas in truth it should be compared to the body. The practice and preference of his own time may have helped to mislead him, for he argues (rather inconsistently, by the way) that plot

must be more indispensable, as young writers are able to construct good stories before they are able to portray character; and more artistic, as it was developed much later in the historical evolution of tragedy. Fortunately for us, the Alexandrian critics were guided by other canons of taste, or the structurally faulty pieces of Aeschylus might have been neglected, and the ingeniously constructed pieces of Agathon preserved in their place.

It is probable, however, that Aristotle's partiality was determined more by the systematising and analytical character of his own genius than by the public opinion of his age; or rather, the same tendency was at work in philosophy and in art at the same time, and the theories of the one were unconsciously pre-adapted to the productions of the other. In both there was a decay of penetration and of originality, of life and of inspiration; in both a great development of whatever could be obtained by technical proficiency; in both an extension of surface at the expense of depth, a gain of fluency, and a loss of force. But poetry lost far more than philosophy by the change; and so the works of the one have perished while the works of the other have survived.

Modern literature offers abundant materials for testing Aristotle's theory, and the immense majority of critics have decided against it. Even among fairly educated readers few would prefer Molière's *L'Étourdi* to his *Misanthrope*, or Schiller's *Maria Stuart* to Goethe's *Faust*, or Lord Lytton's *Lucretia* to George Eliot's *Romola*, or Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities* to the same writer's *Nicholas Nickleby*, or his *Great Expectations* to his *David Copperfield*, although in each instance the work named first has the better plot of the two.

Characters, then, are not introduced that they may perform actions; but actions are represented for the sake of the characters who do them, or who suffer by them. It is not so much a ghostly apparition or a murder which interests us as the fact that the ghost appears to Hamlet, and that the murder

is committed by Macbeth. And the same is true of the Greek drama, though not perhaps to the same extent. We may care for Oedipus chiefly on account of his adventures; but we care far more for what Prometheus or Clytemnestra, Antigone or Ajax, say about themselves than for what they suffer or what they do. Thus, and thus only, are we enabled to understand the tragic element in poetry, the production of pleasure by the spectacle of pain. It is not the satisfaction caused by seeing a skilful imitation of reality, for few have witnessed such awful events in real life as on the stage; nor is it pain, as such, which interests us, for the scenes of torture exhibited in some Spanish and Bolognese paintings do not gratify, they revolt and disgust an educated taste. The true tragic emotion is produced, not by the suffering itself, but by the reaction of the characters against it; for this gives, more than anything else, the idea of a force with which we can synergise, because it is purely mental; or by the helpless submission of the victims whom we wish to assist because they are lovable, and whom we love still more from our inability to assist them, through the transformation of arrested action into feeling, accompanied by the enjoyment proper to tender emotion. Hence the peculiar importance of the female parts in dramatic poetry. Aristotle tells us that it is bad art to represent women as nobler and braver than men, because they are not so in reality.[1] Nevertheless, he should have noticed that on the tragic stage of Athens women first competed with men, then equalled, and finally far surpassed them in loftiness of character.[2] But with his philosophy he could not see that, if heroines did not exist, it would be necessary to create them. For, if women are conceived as reacting against outward circumstances at all, their very helplessness will lead to the

[1] *Poet.*, xv., p. 1454, a, 20.

[2] Μάτην ἄρ' εἰς γυναῖκας ἐξ ἀνδρῶν ψόγος
Ψάλλει κενὸν τόξευμα καὶ κακῶς λέγει.
αἱ δ' εἶσ' ἀμείνους ἀρσένων, ἐγω λέγω.
Euripides, *Frag.* 512. (Didot.)

storing of a greater mental tension in the shape of excited thought and feeling debarred from any manifestation except in words; and it is exactly with this mental tension that the spectator can most easily synergise. The wrath of Orestes is not interesting, because it is entirely absorbed into the premeditation and execution of his vengeance. The passion of Electra is profoundly interesting, because it has no outlet but impotent denunciations of her oppressors, and abortive schemes for her deliverance from their yoke. Hence, also, Shakspeare produces some of his greatest effects by placing his male characters, to some extent, in the position of women, either through their natural weakness and indecision, as with Hamlet, and Brutus, and Macbeth, or through the paralysis of unproved suspicion, as with Othello; while the greatest of all his heroines, Lady Macbeth, is so because she has the intellect and will to frame resolutions of dauntless ambition, and eloquence to force them on her husband, without either the physical or the moral force to execute them herself. In all these cases it is the arrest of an electric current which produces the most intense heat, or the most brilliant illumination. Again, by their extreme sensitiveness, and by the natural desire felt to help them, women excite more pity, which, as we have said, means more love, than men; and this in the highest degree when their sufferings are undeserved. We see, then, how wide Aristotle went of the mark when he made it a rule that the sufferings of tragic characters should be partly brought on by their own fault, and that, speaking generally, they should not be distinguished for justice or virtue, nor yet for extreme wickedness.[1] The 'immoderate moderation' of the Stagirite was never more infelicitously exhibited. For, in order to produce truly tragic effects, excess of every kind not only may, but must, be employed. It is by the reaction of heroic fortitude, either against unmerited outrage, or against the whole pressure of social law, that our synergetic interest is wound up

[1] *Poet.*, xiii., p. 1453, a, 8.

to the intensest pitch. It is when we see a beautiful soul requited with evil for good that our eyes are filled with the noblest tears. Yet so absolutely perverted have men's minds been by the Aristotelian dictum that Gervinus, the great Shakspearian critic, actually tries to prove that Duncan, to some extent, deserved his fate by imprudently trusting himself to the hospitality of Macbeth ; that Desdemona was very imprudent in interceding for Cassio; and that it was treasonable for Cordelia to bring a French army into England! The Greek drama might have supplied Aristotle with several decisive contradictions of his canons. He should have seen that the *Prometheus*, the *Antigone*, and the *Hippolytus* are affecting in proportion to the pre-eminent virtue of their protagonists. The further fallacy of excluding very guilty characters is, of course, most decisively refuted by Shakspeare, whose Richard III., whose Iago, and whose Macbeth excite keen interest by their association of extraordinary villainy with extraordinary intellectual gifts.

So far Aristotle gives us a purely superficial and sensational view of the drama. Yet he could not help seeing that there was a moral element in tragedy, and he was anxious to show, as against Plato, that it exercised an improving effect on the audience. The result is his famous theory of the Catharsis, so long misunderstood, and not certainly understood even now. The object of Tragedy, he tells us, is to purify (or purge away) pity and terror by means of those emotions themselves. The *Poetics* seems originally to have contained an explanation of this mysterious utterance, now lost, and critics have endeavoured to supply the gap by writing eighty treatises on the subject. The result has been at least to show what Aristotle did *not* mean. The popular version of his dictum, which is that tragedy purges the passions by pity and terror, is clearly inconsistent with the wording of the original text. Pity and terror are both the object and the instrument of purification. Nor yet does he mean, as was once supposed,

that each of these emotions is to counterbalance and moderate the other; for this would imply that they are opposed to one another, whereas in the *Rhetoric* he speaks of them as being akin; while a parallel passage in the *Politics*[1] shows him to have believed that the passions are susceptible of homoeopathic treatment. Violent enthusiasm, he tells us, is to be soothed and carried off by a strain of exciting, impassioned music. But whence come the pity and terror which are to be dealt with by tragic poetry? Not, apparently, from the piece itself, for to inoculate the patient with a new disease, merely for the sake of curing it, could do him no imaginable good. To judge from the passage in the *Politics* already referred to, he believes that pity and terror are always present in the minds of all, to a certain extent; and the theory apparently is, that tragedy brings them to the surface, and enables them to be thrown off with an accompaniment of pleasurable feeling. Now, of course, we have a constant capacity for experiencing every passion to which human nature is liable; but to say that in the absence of its appropriate external stimulus we are ever perceptibly and painfully affected by any passion, is to assert what is not true of any sane mind. And, even were it so, were we constantly haunted by vague presentiments of evil to ourselves or others, it is anything but clear that fictitious representations of calamity would be the appropriate means for enabling us to get rid of them. Zeller explains that it is the insight into universal laws controlling our destiny, the association of misfortune with a divine justice, which, according to Aristotle, produces the purifying effect;[2] but this would be the purgation of pity and terror, not by themselves, but by the intellectual framework in which they are set, the concatenation of events, the workings of character, or the reference of everything to an eternal cause. The truth is that Aristotle's explanation of the moral effect produced by tragedy is

[1] *Pol.*, VIII., vii., p. 1342, a, 10.

[2] Zeller, p. 780.

irrational, because his whole conception of tragedy is mistaken. The emotions excited by its highest forms are not terror and pity, but admiration and love, which, in their ideal exercise, are too holy for purification, too high for restriction, and too delightful for relief.

Before parting with the *Poetics* we must add that it contains one excellent piece of advice to dramatists, which is, to imagine themselves present at the scenes which they are supposing to happen, and also at the representation of their own play. This, however, is an exception which proves the rule, for Aristotle's exclusively theoretic standpoint here, as will sometimes happen, coincides with the truly practical standpoint.

A somewhat similar observation applies to the art of reasoning, which it would be possible to compile by bringing together all the rules on the subject, scattered through the *Organon*. Aristotle has discovered and formulated every canon of theoretical consistency, and every artifice of dialectical debate, with an industry and acuteness which cannot be too highly extolled ; and his labours in this direction have perhaps contributed more than those of any other single writer to the intellectual stimulation of after ages ; but the kind of genius requisite for such a task was speculative rather than practical ; there was no experience of human nature in its concrete manifestations, no prevision of real consequences involved. Such a code might be, and probably was to a great extent, abstracted from the Platonic dialogues ; but to work up the processes of thought into a series of dramatic contests, carried on between living individuals, as Plato has done, required a vivid perception and grasp of realities which, and not any poetical mysticism, is what positively distinguishes a Platonist from an Aristotelian.[1]

[1] As an illustration of the stimulating effect produced by the study of Aristotle's logic, we quote the following anecdote from the notes to Whately's edition of Bacon's *Essays* :—'The late Sir Alexander Johnstone, when acting as temporary Governor of Ceylon (soon after its cession), sat once as judge in a trial of a prisoner

V.

But if Aristotle had not his master's enthusiasm for practical reforms, nor his master's command of all the forces by which humanity is raised to a higher life, he had, more even than his master, the Greek passion for knowledge as such, apart from its utilitarian applications, and embracing in its vast orb the lowliest things with the loftiest, the most fragmentary glimpses and the largest revelations of truth. He demanded nothing but the materials for generalisation, and there was nothing from which he could not generalise. There was a place for everything within the limits of his world-wide system. Never in any human soul did the

for a robbery and murder; and the evidence seemed to him so conclusive, that he was about to charge the jury (who were native Cingalese) to find a verdict of guilty. But one of the jurors asked and obtained permission to examine the witnesses himself. He had them brought in one by one, and cross-examined them so ably as to elicit the fact that they were *themselves* the perpetrators of the crime, which they afterwards had conspired to impute to the prisoner. And they were accordingly put on their trial and convicted. Sir Alexander Johnstone was greatly struck by the intelligence displayed by this juror, the more so as he was only a small farmer, who was not known to have had any remarkable advantages of education. He sent for him, and after commending the wonderful sagacity he had shown, inquired eagerly what his studies had been. The man replied that he had never read but one book, the only one he possessed, which had long been in his family, and which he delighted to study in his leisure hours. This book he was prevailed on to show to Sir Alexander Johnstone, who put it into the hands of one who knew the Cingalese language. It turned out to be a translation into that language of a large portion of Aristotle's *Organon*. It appears that the Portuguese, when they first settled in Ceylon and other parts of the East, translated into the native languages several of the works then studied in the European Universities, among which were the Latin versions of Aristotle. The Cingalese in question said that if his understanding had been in any degree cultivated and improved, it was to that book that he owed it. It is likely, however (as was observed to me [Whately] by the late Bishop Copleston), that any other book, containing an equal amount of close reasoning and accurate definition, might have answered the same purpose in sharpening the intellect of the Cingalese.' Possibly, but not to the same effect. What the Cingalese got into his hands was a triple-distilled essence of Athenian legal procedure. The cross-examining elenchus was first borrowed by Socrates from the Athenian courts and applied to philosophical purposes; it was still further elaborated by Plato, and finally reduced to abstract rules by Aristotle; so that in using it as he did the juror was only restoring it to its original purposes.

theorising passion burn with so clear and bright and pure a flame. Under its inspiration his style more than once breaks into a strain of sublime, though simple and rugged eloquence. Speaking of that eternal thought which, according to him, constitutes the divine essence, he exclaims:

> On this principle the heavens and Nature hang. This is that best life which we possess during a brief period only, for there it is so always, which with us is impossible. And its activity is pure pleasure; wherefore waking, feeling, and thinking, are the most pleasureable states, on account of which hope and memory exist. . . . . And of all activities theorising is the most delightful and the best, so that if God always has such happiness as we have in our highest moments, it is wonderful, and still more wonderful if he has more.[1]

Again, he tells us that—

> If happiness consists in the appropriate exercise of our vital functions, then the highest happiness must result from the highest activity, whether we choose to call that reason or anything else which is the ruling and guiding principle within us, and through which we form our conceptions of what is noble and divine; and whether this be intrinsically divine, or only the divinest thing in us, its appropriate activity must be perfect happiness. Now this, which we call the theoretic activity, must be the mightiest; for reason is supreme in our souls and supreme over the objects which it cognises; and it is also the most continuous, for of all activities theorising is that which can be most uninterruptedly carried on. Again, we think that some pleasure ought to be mingled with happiness; if so, of all our proper activities philosophy is confessedly the most pleasurable, the enjoyments afforded by it being wonderfully pure and steady; for the existence of those who are in possession of knowledge is naturally more delightful than the existence of those who merely seek it. Of all virtues this is the most self-sufficing; for while in common with every other virtue it presupposes the indispensable conditions of life, wisdom does not, like justice and temperance and courage, need human objects for its exercise; theorising may go on in perfect solitude; for the co-operation of other men, though helpful, is not absolutely necessary to its activity. All other pursuits are exercised for some end lying outside themselves; war entirely for the sake of

[1] *Metaph.*, XII., vii., p. 1072, b, 13.

peace, and statesmanship in great part for the sake of honour and power ; but theorising yields no extraneous profit great or small, and is loved for itself alone. If, then, the energising of pure reason rises above such noble careers as war and statesmanship by its independence, by its inherent delightfulness, and, so far as human frailty will permit, by its untiring vigour, this must constitute perfect human happiness; or rather such a life is more than human, and man can only partake of it through the divine principle within him ; wherefore let us not listen to those who tell us that we should have no interests except what are human and mortal like ourselves ; but so far as may be put on immortality, and bend all our efforts towards living up to that element of our nature which, though small in compass, is in power and preciousness supreme.[1]

Let us now see how he carries this passionate enthusiasm for knowledge into the humblest researches of zoology :—

Among natural objects, some exist unchanged through all eternity, while others are generated and decay. The former are divinely glorious, but being comparatively inaccessible to our means of observation, far less is known of them than we could wish ; while perishable plants and animals offer abundant opportunities of study to us who live under the same conditions with them. Each science has a charm of its own. For knowledge of the heavenly bodies is so sublime a thing that even a little of it is more delightful than all earthly science put together ; just as the smallest glimpse of a beloved beauty is more delightful than the fullest and nearest revelation of ordinary objects; while, on the other hand, where there are greater facilities for observation, science can be carried much further ; and our closer kinship with the creatures of earth is some compensation for the interest felt in that philosophy which deals with the divine. Wherefore, in our discussions on living beings we shall, so far as possible, pass over nothing, whether it rank high or low in the scale of estimation. For even such of them as displease the senses, when viewed with the eye of reason as wonderful works of Nature afford an inexpressible pleasure to those who can enter philosophically into the causes of things. For, surely, it would be absurd and irrational to look with delight at the images of such objects on account of our interest in the pictorial or plastic skill which they exhibit, and not to take still greater pleasure in a scien-

[1] *Eth. Nic.*, X., vii. (somewhat condensed).

tific explanation of the realities themselves. We ought not then to shrink with childish disgust from an examination of the lower animals, for there is something wonderful in all the works of Nature; and we may repeat what Heracleitus is reported to have said to certain strangers who had come to visit him, but hung back at the door when they saw him warming himself before a fire, bidding them come in boldly, for that there also there were gods; not allowing ourselves to call any creature common or unclean, because there is a kind of natural beauty about them all. For, if anywhere, there is a pervading purpose in the works of Nature, and the realisation of this purpose is the beauty of the thing. But if anyone should look with contempt on the scientific examination of the lower animals, he must have the same opinion about himself; for the greatest repugnance is felt in looking at the parts of which the human body is composed, such as blood, muscles, bones, veins, and the like.[1] Similarly, in discussing any part or organ we should consider that it is not for the matter of which it consists that we care, but for the whole form; just as in talking about a house it is not bricks and mortar and wood that we mean; and so the theory of Nature deals with the essential structure of objects, not with the elements which, apart from that structure, would have no existence at all.[2]

It is well for the reputation of Aristotle that he could apply himself with such devotion to the arduous and, in his time, inglorious researches of natural history and comparative anatomy, since it was only in those departments that he made any real contributions to physical science. In the studies which were to him the noblest and most entrancing of any, his speculations are one long record of wearisome, hopeless, unqualified delusion. If, in the philosophy of practice and the philosophy of art, he afforded no real guidance at all, in the philosophy of Nature his guidance has

[1] It is perfectly possible that Aristotle was not acquainted at first hand with human anatomy. But Sir A. Grant is hardly justified in observing that the words quoted above 'do not show the hardihood of the practised dissecter' (*Aristotle*, p. 3). Aristotle simply takes the popular point of view in order to prove that the internal structure of the lower animals is no more offensive to the eye than that of man. And, as he took so much delight in the former, nothing but want of opportunity is likely to have prevented him from extending his researches to the latter.

[2] *De Part. An.*, I. v.

always led men fatally astray. So far as his means of observation extended, there was nothing that he did not attempt to explain, and in every single instance he was wrong. He has written about the general laws of matter and motion, astronomy, chemistry, meteorology, and physiology, with the result that he has probably made more blunders on those subjects than any human being ever made before or after him. And, if there is one thing more astounding than his unbroken infelicity of speculation, it is the imperturbable self-confidence with which he puts forward his fallacies as demonstrated scientific certainties. Had he been right, it was no 'slight or partial glimpses of the beloved' that would have been vouchsafed him, but the 'fullest and nearest revelation' of her beauties. But the more he looked the less he saw. Instead of drawing aside he only thickened and darkened the veils of sense which obscured her, by mistaking them for the glorious forms that lay concealed beneath.

Modern admirers of Aristotle labour to prove that his errors were inevitable, and belonged more to his age than to himself; that without the mechanical appliances of modern times science could not be cultivated with any hope of success. But what are we to say when we find that on one point after another the true explanation had already been surmised by Aristotle's predecessors or contemporaries, only to be scornfully rejected by Aristotle himself? Their hypotheses may often have been very imperfect, and supported by insufficient evidence; but it must have been something more than chance which always led him wrong when they were so often right. To begin with, the infinity of space is not even now, nor will it ever be, established by improved instruments of observation and measurement; it is deduced by a very simple process of reasoning, of which Democritus and others were capable, while Aristotle apparently was not. He rejects the idea because it is inconsistent with certain very arbitrary assumptions and definitions of his own, whereas he should have

rejected them because they were inconsistent with it. He further rejects the idea of a vacuum, and with it the atomic theory, entirely on *à priori* grounds, although, even in the then existing state of knowledge, atomism explained various phenomena in a perfectly rational manner which he could only explain by unmeaning or nonsensical phrases.[1] It had been already maintained, in his time, that the apparent movements of the heavenly bodies were due to the rotation of the earth on its own axis.[2] Had Aristotle accepted this theory one can imagine how highly his sagacity would have been extolled. We may, therefore, fairly take his rejection of it as a proof of blind adherence to old-fashioned opinions. When he argues that none of the heavenly bodies rotate, because we can see that the moon does not, as is evident from her always turning the same side to us,[3] nothing is needed but the simplest mathematics to demonstrate the fallacy of his reasoning. Others had surmised that the Milky Way was a collection of stars, and that comets were bodies of the same nature as planets. Aristotle is satisfied that both are appearances like meteors, and the aurora borealis—caused by the friction of our atmosphere against the solid aether above it. A similar origin is ascribed to the heat and light derived from the sun and stars; for it would be derogatory to the dignity of those luminaries to suppose, with Anaxagoras, that they are formed of anything so familiar and perishable as fire. On the contrary, they consist of pure aether like the spheres on which they are fixed as protuberances; though

[1] Compare the arguments in *Phys.*, IV., ix.

[2] The hypothesis of the earth's diurnal rotation had clearly been suggested by a celebrated passage in Plato's *Timaeus*, though whether Plato himself held it is still doubtful. That he accepted the revolution of the celestial spheres is absolutely certain; but while to our minds the two beliefs are mutually exclusive, Grote thinks that Plato overlooked the inconsistency. It seems probable that the one was at first actually a generalisation from the other; it was thought that the earth must revolve *because* the crystal spheres revolved; then the new doctrine, thus accidentally struck out, was used to destroy the old one.

[3] *De Coel.*, II., viii., 290, a, 26.

how such an arrangement can co-exist with absolute contact between each sphere and that next below it, or how the effects of friction could be transmitted through such enormous thicknesses of solid crystal, is left unexplained.[1] By a happy anticipation of Roemer, Empedocles conjectured that the transmission of light occupied a certain time: Aristotle declares it to be instantaneous.[2]

On passing to terrestrial physics, we find that Aristotle is, as usual, the dupe of superficial appearances, against which other thinkers were on their guard. Seeing that fire always moved up, he assumed that it did so by virtue of a natural tendency towards the circumference of the universe, as opposed to earth, which always moved towards the centre. The atomists erroneously held that all matter gravitated downwards through infinite space, but correctly explained the ascent of heated particles by the pressure of surrounding matter, in accordance, most probably, with the analogy of floating bodies.[3] Chemistry as a science is, of course, an entirely modern creation, but the first approach to it was made by Democritus, while no ancient philosopher stood farther from its essential principles than Aristotle. He analyses bodies, not into their material elements, but into the sensuous qualities, hot and cold, wet and dry, between which he supposes the underlying substance to be perpetually oscillating; a theory which, if it were true, would make any fixed laws of nature impossible.

It might have been expected that, on reaching physiology, the Stagirite would stand on firmer ground than any of his contemporaries. Such, however, is not the case. As already observed, his achievements belong entirely to the dominion of anatomy and descriptive zoology. The whole internal economy of the animal body is, according to him, designed for the purpose of creating and moderating the vital heat;

[1] Zeller, p. 469. [2] *De Sens.*, vi., 446, a, 26.
[3] *De Cœl.*, I., viii., 277, b, 2.

and in apportioning their functions to the different organs he is entirely dominated by this fundamental error. It was a common notion among the Greeks, suggested by sufficiently obvious considerations, that the brain is the seat of the psychic activities. These, however, Aristotle transports to the heart, which, in his system, not only propels the blood through the body, but is also the source of heat, the common centre where the different special sensations meet to be compared, and the organ of imagination and of passion. The sole function of the brain is to cool down the blood—a purpose which the lungs also subserve. Some persons believe that air is a kind of food, and is inhaled in order to feed the internal fire; but their theory would involve the absurd consequence that all animals breathe, for all have some heat. Anaxagoras and Diogenes did, indeed, make that assertion, and the latter even went so far as to say that fish breathe with their gills, absorbing the air held in solution by the water passed through them—a misapprehension, says Aristotle, which arose from not having studied the final cause of respiration.[1] His physiological theory of generation is equally unfortunate. In accordance with his metaphysical system, hereafter to be explained, he distinguishes two elements in the reproductive process, of which one, that contributed by the male, is exclusively formative; and the other, that contributed by the female, exclusively material. The prevalent opinion was evidently, what we know now to be true, that each parent has both a formative and a material share in the composition of the embryo. Again, Aristotle, strangely enough, regards the generative element in both sexes as an unappropriated portion of the animal's nutriment, the last and most refined product of digestion, and therefore not a portion of the parental system at all; while other biologists, anticipating Mr. Darwin's theory of pangenesis in a very wonderful manner, taught that the semen is a con-

[1] *De Respir.*, i. and ii.

flux of molecules derived from every part of the body, and thus strove to account for the hereditary transmission of individual peculiarities to offspring.[1]

All these, however, are mere questions of detail. It is on a subject of the profoundest philosophical importance that Aristotle differs most consciously, most radically, and most fatally from his predecessors. They were evolutionists, and he was a stationarist. They were mechanicists, and he was a teleologist. They were uniformitarians, and he was a dualist. It is true that, as we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Mr. Edwin Wallace makes him 'recognise the genesis of things by evolution and development,' but the meaning of this phrase requires to be cleared up. In one sense it is, of course, almost an identical proposition. The genesis of things must be by genesis of some kind or other. The great question is, what things have been evolved, and how have they been evolved? Modern science tells us, that not only have all particular aggregates of matter and motion now existing come into being within a finite period of time, but also that the specific types under which we arrange those aggregates have equally been generated; and that their characteristics, whether structural or functional, can only be understood by tracing out their origin and history. And it further teaches us that the properties of every aggregate result from the properties of its ultimate elements, which, within the limits of our experience, remain absolutely unchanged. Now, Aristotle taught very nearly the contrary of all this. He believed that the cosmos, as we now know it, had existed, and would continue to exist, unchanged through all eternity. The sun, moon, planets, and stars, together with the orbs containing them, are composed of an absolutely ungenerable, incorruptible substance. The earth, a cold, heavy, solid sphere, though liable to superficial changes, has always occupied its present position in the centre of the universe.

[1] *De Gen. An.*, I., xvii.

The specific forms of animal life—except a few which are produced spontaneously—have, in like manner, been preserved unaltered through an infinite series of generations. Man shares the common lot. There is no continuous progress of civilisation. Every invention and discovery has been made and lost an infinite number of times. Our philosopher could not, of course, deny that individual living things come into existence and gradually grow to maturity; but he insists that their formation is teleologically determined by the parental type which they are striving to realise. He asks whether we should study a thing by examining how it grows, or by examining its completed form: and Mr. Wallace quotes the question without quoting the answer.[1] Aristotle tells us that the genetic method was followed by his predecessors, but that the other method is his. And he goes on to censure Empedocles for saying that many things in the animal body are due simply to mechanical causation; for example, the segmented structure of the backbone, which that philosopher attributes to continued doubling and twisting—the very same explanation, we believe, that would be given of it by a modern evolutionist.[2] Finally, Aristotle assumes the only sort of transformation which we deny, and which Democritus equally denied—that is to say, the transformation of the ultimate elements into one another by the oscillation of an indeterminate matter between opposite qualities.

[1] *Outlines*, p. 30.

[2] There is a passage in the *Politics* (I., ii., *sub. in.*) in which Aristotle distinctly inculcates the method of studying things by observing how they are first produced, and how they grow; but this is quite inconsistent with the more deliberate opinion referred to in the text (*De Part. An.*, I., i., p. 640, a, 10). Perhaps, in writing the first book of the *Politics* he was more immediately under the influence of Plato, who preferred the old genetic method in practice, though not in theory.

VI.

The truth is that while our philosopher had one of the most powerful intellects ever possessed by any man, it was an intellect strictly limited to the surface of things. He was utterly incapable of divining the hidden forces by which inorganic nature and life and human society are moved. He had neither the genius which can reconstruct the past, nor the genius which partly moulds, partly foretells the future. But wherever he has to observe or to report, to enumerate or to analyse, to describe or to define, to classify or to compare; and whatever be the subject, a mollusc or a mammal, a mouse or an elephant; the structure and habits of wild animals; the different stages in the development of an embryo bird; the variations of a single organ or function through the entire zoological series; the hierarchy of intellectual faculties; the laws of mental association; the specific types of virtuous character; the relation of equity to law; the relation of reason to impulse; the ideals of friendship; the different members of a household; the different orders in a State; the possible variations of political constitutions, or within the same constitution; the elements of dramatic or epic poetry; the modes of predication; the principles of definition, classification, judgment, and reasoning; the different systems of philosophy; all varieties of passion, all motives to action, all sources of conviction;—there we find an enormous accumulation of knowledge, an unwearied patience of research, a sweep of comprehension, a subtlety of discrimination, an accuracy of statement, an impartiality of decision, and an all-absorbing enthusiasm for science, which, if they do not raise him to the supreme level of creative genius, entitle him to rank a very little way below it.

It was natural that one who ranged with such consummate mastery over the whole world of apparent reality, should believe in no other reality; that for him truth should only

mean the systematisation of sense and language, of opinion, and of thought. The visible order of nature was present to his imagination in such precise determination and fulness of detail that it resisted any attempt he might have made to conceive it under a different form. Each of his conclusions was supported by analogies from every other department of enquiry, because he carried the peculiar limitations of his thinking faculty with him wherever he turned, and unconsciously accommodated every subject to the framework which they imposed. The clearness of his ideas necessitated the use of sharply-drawn distinctions, which prevented the free play of generalisation and fruitful interchange of principles between the different sciences. And we shall have occasion to show hereafter, that, when he attempted to combine rival theories, it was done by placing them in juxtaposition rather than by mutual interpenetration. Again, with his vivid perceptions, it was impossible for him to believe in the justification of any method claiming to supersede, or even to supplement, their authority. Hence he was hardly less opposed to the atomism of Democritus than to the scepticism of Protagoras or the idealism of Plato. Hence, also, his dislike for all explanations which assumed that there were hidden processes at work below the surface of things, even taking surface in its most literal sense. Thus, in discussing the question why the sea is salt, he will not accept the theory that rivers dissolve out the salt from the strata through which they pass, and carry it down to the sea, because river-water tastes fresh ; and propounds in its stead the utterly false hypothesis of a dry saline evaporation from the earth's surface, which he supposes to be swept seawards by the wind.[1] Even in his own especial province of natural history the same tendency leads him astray. He asserts that the spider throws off its web from the surface of its body like a skin, instead of evolving it from within, as Democritus had taught.[2] The same thinker had

[1] *Meteor.*, II., iii., 357, a, 15 ff. [2] *Hist. An.*, IX., xxxix., *sub fin.*

endeavoured to prove by analogical reasoning that the invertebrate animals must have viscera, and that only their extreme minuteness prevents us from perceiving them; a view which his successor will not admit.[1] In fact, wherever the line between the visible and the invisible is crossed, Aristotle's powers are suddenly paralysed, as if by enchantment.

Another circumstance which led Aristotle to disregard the happy aperçus of earlier philosophers was his vast superiority to them in positive knowledge. It never occurred to him that their sagacity might be greater than his, precisely because its exercise was less impeded by the labour of acquiring and retaining such immense masses of irrelevant facts. And his confidence was still further enhanced by the conviction that all previous systems were absorbed into his own, their scattered truths co-ordinated, their aberrations corrected, and their discords reconciled. But in striking a general average of existing philosophies, he was in reality bringing them back to that anonymous philosophy which is embodied in common language and common opinion. And if he afterwards ruled the minds of men with a more despotic sway than any other intellectual master, it was because he gave an organised expression to the principle of authority, which, if it could, would stereotype and perpetuate the existing type of civilisation for all time.

Here, then, are three main points of distinction between our philosopher and his precursors, the advantage being, so far, entirely on their side. He did not, like the Ionian physiologists, anticipate in outline our theories of evolution. He held that the cosmos had always been, by the strictest necessity, arranged in the same manner; the starry revolutions never changing; the four elements preserving a constant balance; the earth always solid; land and water always distributed according to their present proportions; living

[1] *De Part. An.*, III., iv., *sub in.*

species transmitting the same unalterable type through an infinite series of generations; the human race enjoying an eternal duration, but from time to time losing all its conquests in some great physical catastrophe, and obliged to begin over again with the depressing consciousness that nothing could be devised which had not been thought of an infinite number of times already; the existing distinctions between Hellenes and barbarians, masters and slaves, men and women, grounded on everlasting necessities of nature. He did not, like Democritus, distinguish between objective and subjective properties of matter; nor admit that void space extends to infinity round the starry sphere, and honeycombs the objects which seem most incompressible and continuous to our senses. He did not hope, like Socrates, for the regeneration of the individual, nor, like Plato, for the regeneration of the race, by enlightened thought. It seemed as if Philosophy, abdicating her high function, and obstructing the paths which she had first opened, were now content to systematise the forces of prejudice, blindness, immobility, and despair.

For the restrictions under which Aristotle thought were not determined by his personality alone; they followed on the logical development of speculation, and would have imposed themselves on any other thinker equally capable of carrying that development to its predetermined goal. The Ionian search for a primary cause and substance of nature led to the distinction, made almost simultaneously, although from opposite points of view, by Parmenides and Heracleitus, between appearance and reality. From that distinction sprang the idea of mind, organised by Socrates into a systematic study of ethics and dialectics. Time and space, the necessary conditions of physical causality, were eliminated from a method having for its form the eternal relations of difference and resemblance, for its matter the present interests of humanity. Socrates taught that before enquiring whence things come we must first determine what it is they are.

Hence he reduced science to the framing of exact definitions. Plato followed on the same track, and refused to answer a single question about anything until the subject of investigation had been clearly determined. But the form of causation had taken such a powerful hold on Greek thought, that it could not be immediately shaken off; and Plato, as he devoted more and more attention to the material universe, saw himself compelled, like the older philosophers, to explain its construction by tracing out the history of its growth. What is even more significant, he applied the same method to ethics and politics, finding it easier to describe how the various virtues and types of social union came into existence, than to analyse and classify them as fixed ideas without reference to time. Again, while taking up the Eleatic antithesis of reality and appearance, and re-interpreting it as a distinction between noumena and phenomena, ideas and sensations, spirit and matter, he was impelled by the necessity of explaining himself, and by the actual limitations of experience to assimilate the two opposing series, or, at least, to view the fleeting, superficial images as a reflection and adumbration of the being which they concealed. And of all material objects, it seemed as if the heavenly bodies, with their orderly, unchanging movements, their clear brilliant light, and their remoteness from earthly impurities, best represented the philosopher's ideal. Thus, Plato, while on the one side he reaches back to the pre-Socratic age, on the other reaches forward to the Aristotelian system.

Nor was this all. As the world of sense was coming back into favour, the world of reason was falling into disrepute. Just as the old physical philosophy had been decomposed by the Sophisticism of Protagoras and Gorgias, so also the dialectic of Socrates was corrupted into the sophistry of Eubulides and Euthydêmus. Plato himself discovered that by reasoning deductively from purely abstract premises, contradictory conclusions could be established with apparently

equal force. It was difficult to see how a decision could be arrived at except by appealing to the testimony of sense. And a moral reform could hardly be effected except by similarly taking into account the existing beliefs and customs of mankind.

It is possible, we think, to trace a similar evolution in the history of the Attic drama. The tragedies of Aeschylus resemble the old Ionian philosophy in this, that they are filled with material imagery, and that they deal with remote interests, remote times, and remote places. Sophocles withdraws his action into the subjective sphere, and simultaneously works out a pervading contrast between the illusions by which men are either lulled to false security or racked with needless anguish, and the terrible or consolatory reality to which they finally awaken. We have also, in his well-known irony, in the unconscious self-betrayal of his characters, that subtle evanescent allusiveness to a hidden truth, that gleaming of reality through appearance which constitutes, first the dialectic, then the mythical illustration, and finally the physics of Plato. In Aeschylus also we have the spectacle of sudden and violent vicissitudes, the abasement of insolent prosperity, and the punishment of long successful crime ; only with him the characters which attract most interest are not the blind victims, but the accomplices or the confidants of destiny—the great figures of a Prometheus, a Darius, an Eteocles, a Clytemnestra, and a Cassandra, who are raised above the common level to an eminence where the secrets of past and future are unfolded to their gaze. Far otherwise with Sophocles. The leading actors in his most characteristic works, Oedipus, Electra, Dejanira, Ajax, and Philoctêtes, are surrounded by forces which they can neither control nor understand ; moving in a world of illusion, if they help to work out their own destinies it is unconsciously, or even in direct opposition to their own designs.[1] Hence in Aeschylus we have something

[1] This characterisation applies neither to the *Antigone* nor to the *Oedipus in Colônus*, the first and the last extant dramas of Sophocles. The reason is

like that superb self-confidence which distinguishes a Parmenides and a Heracleitus; in Sophocles that confession of human ignorance which the Athenian philosophers made on their own behalf, or strove to extract from others. Euripides introduces us to another mode of thought, more akin to that which characterises Aristotle. For, although there is abundance of mystery in his tragedies, it has not the profound religious significance of the Sophoclean irony; he uses it rather for romantic and sentimental purposes, for the construction of an intricate plot, or for the creation of pathetic situations. His whole power is thrown into the immediate and detailed representation of living passion, and of the surroundings in which it is displayed, without going far back into its historical antecedents like Aeschylus, or, like Sophocles, into the divine purposes which underlie it. On the other hand, as a Greek writer could not be other than philosophical, he uses particular incidents as an occasion for wide generalisations and dialectical discussions; these, and not the idea of justice or of destiny, being the pedestal on which his figures are set. And it may be noticed as another curious coincidence that, like Aristotle again, he is disposed to criticise his predecessors, or at least one of them, Aeschylus, with some degree of asperity.

The critical tendency just alluded to suggests one more reason why philosophy, from having been a method of discovery, should at last become a mere method of description and arrangement. The materials accumulated by nearly three centuries of observation and reasoning were so enormous that they began to stifle the imaginative faculty. If there was any opening for originality it lay in the task of carrying order into this chaos by reducing it to a few general heads, by mapping out the whole field of knowledge, and subjecting each particular branch to the new-found processes of definition

that the one is still half Aeschylean, and the other distinctly an imitation of Euripides.

and classification. And along with the incapacity for framing new theories there arose a desire to diminish the number of those already existing, to frame, if possible, a system which should select and combine whatever was good in any or all of them.

VII.

This, then, was the revolution effected by Aristotle, that he found Greek thought in the form of a solid, and unrolled into a surface of the utmost possible tenuity, transparency, and extension. In so doing, he completed what Socrates and Plato had begun, he paralleled the course already described by Greek poetry, and he offered the first example of what since then has more than once recurred in the history of philosophy. It was thus that the residual substance of Locke and Berkeley was resolved into phenomenal succession by Hume. It was thus that the unexplained reality of Kant and Fichte was drawn out into a play of logical relations by Hegel. And, if we may venture on a forecast of the future towards which speculation is now advancing, it is thus that the limits imposed on human knowledge by positivists and agnostics in our own day, are yielding to the criticism of those who wish to establish either a perfect identity or a perfect equation between consciousness and being. This is the position represented in France by M. Taine, a thinker offering many points of resemblance to Aristotle, which it would be interesting to work out had we space at our command for the purpose. The forces which are now guiding English philosophy in an analogous direction have hitherto escaped observation on account of their disunion among themselves, and their intermixture with others of a different character. But on the whole we may say that the philosophy of Mill and his school corresponds very nearly in its practical idealism to Plato's teaching; that Mr. Herbert Spencer approaches

Aristotle on the side of theorising systematisation, while sharing to a more limited extent the metaphysical and political realism which accompanied it; that Lewes was carrying the same transformation a step further in his unfinished *Problems of Life and Mind*; that the philosophy of Mr. Shadworth Hodgson is marked by the same spirit of actuality, though not without a vista of multitudinous possibilities in the background; that the Neo-Hegelian school are trying to do over again for us what their master did in Germany; and that the lamented Professor Clifford had already given promise of one more great attempt to widen the area of our possible experience into co-extension with the whole domain of Nature.[1]

The systematising power of Aristotle, his faculty for bringing the isolated parts of a surface into co-ordination and continuity, is apparent even in those sciences with whose material truths he was utterly unacquainted. Apart from the falseness of their fundamental assumptions, his scientific treatises are, for their time, masterpieces of method. In this respect they far surpass his moral and metaphysical works, and they are also written in a much more vigorous style, occasionally even rising into eloquence. He evidently moves with much more assurance on the solid ground of external nature than in the cloudland of Platonic dialectics, or among the possibilities of an ideal morality. If, for example, we open his *Physics*, we shall find such notions as Causation, Infinity, Matter, Space, Time, Motion, and Force, for the first time in history separately discussed, defined, and made the foundation of natural philosophy. The treatise *On the Heavens* very properly regards the celestial movements as a purely mechanical problem, and strives throughout to bring theory and practice

[1] Cf. the memorable declaration of Mr. F. Pollock: 'To me it amounts to a contradiction in terms to speak of unknowable existence or unknowable reality in an absolute sense. I cannot tell what existence means if not the possibility of being known or perceived.'—*Spinoza*, p. 163.

into complete agreement. While directly contradicting the truths of modern astronomy, it stands on the same ground with them ; and anyone who had mastered it would be far better prepared to receive those truths than if he were only acquainted with such a work as Plato's *Timaeus*. The remaining portions of Aristotle's scientific encyclopaedia follow in perfect logical order, and correspond very nearly to Auguste Comte's classification, if, indeed, they did not directly or indirectly suggest it. We cannot, however, view the labours of Aristotle with unmixed satisfaction until he comes on to deal with the provinces of natural history, comparative anatomy, and comparative psychology. Here, as we have shown, the subject exactly suited the comprehensive observation and systematising formalism in which he excelled. Here, accordingly, not only the method but the matter of his teaching is good. In theorising about the causes of phenomena he was behind the best science of his age ; in dissecting the phenomena themselves he was far before it. Of course very much of what he tells was learned at second-hand, and some of it is not authentic. But to collect such masses of information from the reports of uneducated hunters, fishermen, grooms, shepherds, beemasters, and the like, required an extraordinary power of putting pertinent questions, such as could only be acquired in the school of Socratic dialectic. Nor should we omit to notice the vivid intelligence which enabled even ordinary Greeks to supply him with the facts required for his generalisations. But some of his most important researches must be entirely original. For instance, he must have traced the development of the embryo chicken with his own eyes ; and, here, we have it on good authority that his observations are remarkable for their accuracy, in a field where accuracy, according to Caspar Friedrich Wolff, is almost impossible.[1]

[1] *Aristoteles von d. Zeugung u. Entwickelung d. Thiere.* Aubert u. Wimmer, Einleitung, p. 15.

Still more important than these observations themselves is the great truth he derives from them—since rediscovered and worked out in detail by Von Baer—that in the development of each individual the generic characters make their appearance before the specific characters.[1] Nor is this a mere accidental or isolated remark, but, as we shall show in the next chapter, intimately connected with one of the philosopher's metaphysical theories. Although not an evolutionist, he has made other contributions to biology, the importance of which has been first realised in the light of the evolution theory. Thus he notices the antagonism between individuation and reproduction ;[2] the connexion of increased size with increased vitality ;[3] the connexion of greater mobility,[4] and of greater intelligence,[5] with increased complexity of structure ; the physiological division of labour in the higher animals ;[6] the formation of heterogeneous organs out of homogeneous tissues ;[7] the tendency towards greater centralisation in the higher organisms [8]—a remark connected with his two great anatomical discoveries, the central position of the heart in the vascular system, and the possession of a backbone by all red-blooded animals ;[9] the resemblance of animal intelligence to a rudimentary human intelligence, especially as manifested in children ;[10] and, finally, he attempts to trace a continuous series of gradations connecting the inorganic with the organic world, plants with animals, and the lower animals with man.[11]

The last mentioned principle gives one more illustration of the distinction between Aristotle's system and that of the evolutionist, properly so called. The continuity recognised

[1] *De Gen. An.*, II., iii., 736, b, 1. [2] *Ibid.*, I., xviii., 725, b, 25.
[3] *De Respir.*, 477, a, 18. [4] *De Part. An.*, I., vii., *sub. in.*
[5] *Ibid.*, II., x., 656, a, 4. [6] *Ibid.*, IV., vi., 683, a, 25. [7] *Ibid.*, II., i.
[8] *Ibid.*, IV., v., 682, a, 8 ; *De Long.*, vi., 467, a, 18 ; *De Ingr. An.*, vii., 707, a, 24.
[9] *De Part. An.*, II., ix., 664, b, 11 ; Zeller, p. 522.
[10] *Hist. An.*, VIII., i, *sub in.* [11] Zeller, p. 553.

by the former only obtains among a number of coexisting types ; it is a purely logical or ideal arrangement, facilitating the acquisition and retention of knowledge, but adding nothing to its real content. The continuity of the latter implies a causal connexion between successive types evolved from each other by the action of mechanical forces. Moreover, our modern theory, while accounting for whatever is true in Aristotle's conception, serves, at the same time, to correct its exaggeration. The totality of existing species only imperfectly fill up the interval between the highest human life and the inorganic matter from which we assume it to be derived, because they are collaterally, and not lineally, related. Probably no one of them corresponds to any less developed stage of another, although some have preserved, with more constancy than others, the features of a common parent. In diverging from a single stock (if we accept the monogenetic hypothesis,) they have become separated by considerable spaces, which the innumerable multitude of extinct species alone could fill up.

Our preliminary survey of the subject is now completed. So far, we have been engaged in studying the mind of Aristotle rather than his system of philosophy. In the next chapter we shall attempt to give a more complete account of that system in its internal organisation not less than in its relations to modern science and modern thought.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SYSTEMATIC PHILOSOPHY OF ARISTOTLE.

I.

WE have considered the Aristotelian philosophy in relation to the great concrete interests of life, morals, politics, literature, and science. We have now to ask what it has to tell us about the deepest and gravest problems of any, the first principles of Being and Knowing, God and the soul, spirit and matter, metaphysics, psychology, and logic. We saw that very high claims were advanced on behalf of Aristotle in respect to his treatment of these topics; and had we begun with them, we should only have been following the usual example of his expositors. We have, however, preferred keeping them to the last, that our readers might acquire some familiarity with the Aristotelian method, by seeing it applied to subjects where the results were immediately intelligible, and could be tested by an appeal to the experience of twenty-two centuries. We know that there are some who will demur to this proceeding, who will say that Aristotle the metaphysician stands on quite different ground from Aristotle the man of science, because in the one capacity he had, and in the other capacity he had not, sufficient facts to warrant an authoritative conclusion. They will say, with Prof. St. George Mivart, that in accumulating natural knowledge men's minds have become deadened to spiritual truth; or with Mr. Edwin Wallace, that the questions opened by Aristotle have not yet been closed, and that we may with advantage begin

our study of them under his guidance. We, on the other hand, will endeavour to show that there is a unity of composition running through the Stagirite's entire labours, that they everywhere manifest the same excellences and defects, which are those of an anatomising, critical, descriptive, classificatory genius; that his most important conclusions, however great their historical interest, are without any positive or even educational value for us, being almost entirely based on false physical assumptions; that his ontology and psychology are not what his admirers suppose them to be; and that his logic, though meriting our gratitude, is far too confused and incomplete to throw any light on the questions raised by modern thinkers.

Here, as elsewhere, we shall employ the genetic method of investigation. Aristotle's writings do not, indeed, present that gradual development of ideas which makes the Platonic Dialogues so interesting. Still they exhibit traces of such a development, and the most important among them seems to have been compiled from notes taken by the philosopher before his conclusions were definitely reasoned out, or worked up into a consistent whole. It is this fragmentary collection which, from having been placed by some unknown editor after the *Physics*, has received a name still associated with every kind of speculation that cannot be tested by a direct or indirect appeal to the evidence of external sense.

Whether there exist any realities beyond what are revealed to us by this evidence, and what sensible evidence itself may be worth, were problems already actively canvassed in Aristotle's time. His *Metaphysics* at once takes us into the thick of the debate. The first question of that age was, What are the causes and principles of things? On one side stood the materialists—the old Ionian physicists and their living representatives. They said that all things came from water or air or fire, or from a mixture of the four elements, or from the interaction of opposites, such as wet and dry, hot and cold.

Aristotle, following in the track of his master, Plato, blames them for ignoring the incorporeal substances, by which he does not mean what would now be understood—feelings or states of consciousness, or even the spiritual substratum of consciousness—but rather the general qualities or assemblages of qualities which remain constant amid the fluctuations of sensible phenomena; considered, let us observe, not as subjective thoughts, but as objective realities. Another deficiency in the older physical theories is that they either ignore the efficient cause of motion altogether (like Thales), or assign causes not adequate to the purpose (like Empedocles); or when they hit on the true cause do not make the right use of it (like Anaxagoras). Lastly, they have omitted to study the final cause of a thing—the good for which it exists.

The teleology of Aristotle requires a word of explanation, which may appropriately find its place in the present connexion. In speaking of a purpose in Nature, he does not mean that natural productions subserve an end lying outside themselves; as if, to use Goethe's illustration, the bark of cork-trees was intended to be made into stoppers for ginger-beer bottles; but that in every perfect thing the parts are interdependent, and exist for the sake of the whole to which they belong. Nor does he, like so many theologians, both ancient and modern, argue from the evidence of design in Nature to the operation of a designing intelligence outside her. Not believing in any creation at all apart from works of art, he could not believe in a creative intelligence other than that of man. He does, indeed, constantly speak of Nature as if she were a personal providence, continually exerting herself for the good of her creatures. But, on looking a little closer, we find that the agency in question is completely unconscious, and may be identified with the constitution of each particular thing, or rather of the type to which it belongs. We have said that Aristotle's intellect was essentially descriptive, and we have here another illustration of its characteristic quality.

The teleology which he parades with so much pomp adds nothing to our knowledge of causes, implies nothing that a positivist need not readily accept. It is a mere study of functions, an analysis of statical relations. Of course, if there were really any philosophers who said that the connexion between teeth and mastication was entirely accidental, the Aristotelian doctrine was a useful protest against such an absurdity; but when we have established a fixed connexion between organ and function, we are bound to explain the association in some more satisfactory manner than by re-affirming it in general terms, which is all that Aristotle ever does. Again, whatever may be the relative justification of teleology as a study of functions in the living body, we have no grounds for interpreting the phenomena of inorganic nature on an analogous principle. Some Greek philosophers were acute enough to perceive the distinction. While admitting that plants and animals showed traces of design, they held that the heavenly bodies arose spontaneously from the movements of a vortex or some such cause;[1] just as certain religious savants of our own day reject the Darwinian theory while accepting the nebular hypothesis.[2] But to Aristotle the unbroken regularity of the celestial movements, which to us is the best proof of their purely mechanical nature, was, on the contrary, a proof that they were produced and directed by an absolutely reasonable purpose; much more so indeed than terrestrial organisms, marked as these are by occasional deviations and imperfections; and he concludes that each of those movements must be directed towards the attainment of some correspondingly consummate end;[3] while, again, in dealing with those precursors of Mr. Darwin, if such they can be called, who argued that the utility of an organ does not disprove its spontaneous origin, since only the creatures which, by a happy accident, came to possess it would survive—he

[1] *Phys.*, II., viii., p. 198, b, 24. [2] The late Father Secchi, for example.
[3] *Phys.*, II., iv., p. 196, a, 28; *De Coel.*, II., xii.

answers that the constant reproduction of such organs is enough to vindicate them from being the work of chance;[1] thus displaying his inability to distinguish between the two ideas of uniform causation and design.

As a result of the foregoing criticism, Aristotle distinguishes four different causes or principles by which all things are determined to be what they are—Matter, Form, Agent, and Purpose.[2] If, for example, we take a saw, the matter is steel; the form, a toothed blade; the agent or cause of its assuming that shape, a smith; the purpose, to divide wood or stone. When we have enumerated these four principles, we have told everything that can be known about a saw. But Aristotle could not keep the last three separate; he gradually extended the definition of form until it absorbed, or became identified with, agent and purpose.[3] It was what we should call the idea of function that facilitated the transition. If the very essence or nature of a saw implies use, activity, movement, how can we define it without telling its purpose? The toothed blade is only intelligible as a cutting, dividing instrument. Again, how came the saw into being? What shaped the steel into that particular form? We have said that it was the smith. But surely that is too vague. The smith is a man, and may be able to exercise other trades as well. Suppose him to be a musician, did he make the saw in that capacity? No; and here comes in a distinction which plays an immense part in Aristotle's metaphysics, whence it has passed into our every-day speech. He does not make the saw *qua* musician but *qua* smith. He can, however, in the exercise of his trade as smith make many other tools—knives, axes, and so forth. Nevertheless, had he only learned to make saws it would be enough. Therefore, he does not make

[1] *Phys.*, II., viii., p. 199, b, 14.

[2] *Metaph.*, I., iii., *sub in.*; *Anal. Post.*, II., xi., *sub in.* Bekker. (cap. x., in the Tauchnitz ed.); *Phys.* II., iii.; *De Gen. An.*, I., i. *sub in.*

[3] *Metaph.*, VIII., iv., p. 1044, b, 1; *De Gen. An.*, I., i., p. 715, a, 6; *ib.* II., i., 732, a, 4; *Phys.*, II., vii., p. 198, a, 24 ff.

the saw *quâ* axe-maker, he makes it *quâ* saw-maker. Nor, again, does he make it with his whole mind and body, but only with just those thoughts and movements required to give the steel that particular shape. Now, what are these thoughts but the idea of a saw present in his mind and passing through his eyes and hands, till it fixes itself on the steel? The immaterial form of a saw creates the real saw which we use. Let us apply the preceding analogies to a natural object; for example, a man. What is the Form, the definition of a man? Not a being possessing a certain outward shape, for then a marble statue would be a man, which it is not; nor yet a certain assemblage of organs, for then a corpse would be a man, which, according to Aristotle, criticising Democritus, it is not; but a living, feeling, and reasoning being, the end of whose existence is to fulfil all the functions involved in this definition. So, also, the creative cause of a man is another man, who directly impresses the human form on the material supplied by the female organism. In the same way, every definite individual aggregate becomes what it is through the agency of another individual representing the same type in its perfect manifestation.[1]

The substantial forms of Aristotle, combining as they do the notion of a definition with that of a moving cause and a fulfilled purpose, are evidently derived from the Platonic Ideas; a reflection which at once leads us to consider the relation in which he stands to the spiritualism of Plato and to the mathematical idealism of the Neo-Pythagoreans. He agrees with them in thinking that general conceptions are the sole object of knowledge—the sole enduring reality in a world of change. He differs from them in maintaining that such conceptions have no existence apart from the particulars in which they reside. It has been questioned whether Aristotle ever really understood his master's teaching on the subject. Among recent critics, M. Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire asserts,

[1] *Phys.*, II., iii., p. 195, a, 32 ff.; *Metaph.*, IX., viii., p. 1049, b 24.

with considerable vehemence, that he did not. It is certain that in some respects Aristotle is not just to the Platonic theory, that he exaggerates its absurdities, ignores its developments, and occasionally brings charges against it which might be retorted with at least equal effect against his own philosophy. But on the most important point of all, whether Plato did or did not ascribe a separate existence to his Ideas, we could hardly believe a disciple of twenty years' standing [1] to be mistaken, even if the master had not left on record a decisive testimony to the affirmative side in his *Parmenides*, and one scarcely less decisive in his *Timaeus*.[2] And so far as the controversy reduces itself to this particular issue, Aristotle is entirely right. His most powerful arguments are not, indeed, original, having been anticipated by Plato himself; but as they were left unanswered he had a perfect right to repeat them, and his dialectical skill was great enough to make him independent of their support. The extreme minuteness of his criticism is wearisome to us, who can hardly conceive how another opinion could ever have been held. Yet such was the fascination exercised by Plato's idealism, that not only was it upheld with considerable acrimony by his immediate followers,[3] but under one form or another it has been revived over and over again, in the long period which has elapsed since its first promulgation, and on every one of these occasions the arguments of Aristotle have been raised up again to meet it, each time with triumphant success. Ockham's razor, *Entia non sunt sine necessitate multiplicanda*, is borrowed from the *Metaphysics*; Locke's principal objection to innate ideas closely resembles the sarcastic observation in

[1] That is, according to the traditional view, which, however, will have to be considerably modified if we accept the conclusions embodied in Teichmüller's *Literarische Fehden*.

[2] *Parmen.*, 130, A ff.; *Tim.*, 28, A.

[3] As we may infer from a passage in the *Rhetoric* (II., ii., p. 1379, a, 35), where partisans of the Idea are said to be exasperated by any slight thrown on their favourite doctrine.

the last chapter of the *Posterior Analytics*, that, according to Plato's theory, we must have some very wonderful knowledge of which we are not conscious.[1] And the weapons with which Trendelenburg and others have waged war on Hegel are avowedly drawn from the Aristotelian arsenal.[2]

In his criticism on the ideal theory, Aristotle argues that it is unproved; that the consequences to which it leads would be rejected by the idealists themselves; that it involves a needless addition to the sum of existence; that it neither explains the origin of things nor helps us to understand them, while taking away from them their substantial reality; that the Ideas are merely sensible objects hypostasised, like the anthropomorphic divinities of primitive men; that, to speak of them as patterns, in whose likeness the world was created, is a mere idle metaphor; that, even assuming the existence of such patterns, each individual must be made in the likeness, not of one, but of many ideas—a human being, for instance, must be modelled after the ideal biped and the ideal animal, as well as after the ideal man; while many of the ideas themselves, although all are supposed to exist absolutely, must be dependent on other and simpler types; finally, that, assuming an idea for every abstract relation, there must be ideas to represent the relation between every sensible object and its prototype, others for the new relations thus introduced, and so on to infinity.

Aristotle's objections to the Neo-Pythagorean theory of ideal numbers need not delay us here. They are partly a repetition of those brought against the Platonic doctrine in its

[1] Repeated in the *Metaphysics*, I., ix., p. 993, a, 1.

[2] This may seem inconsistent with our former assertion, that Hegel holds in German philosophy a place analogous to that held by Aristotle in Greek philosophy. Such analogies, however, are always more or less incomplete; and, so far as he attributes a self-moving power to ideas, Hegel is a Platonist rather than an Aristotelian. Similarly, as an evolutionist, Mr. Herbert Spencer stands much nearer to early Greek thought than to Aristotle, whom, in other respects, he so much resembles.

original form, partly derived from the impossibility of identifying qualitative with quantitative differences.[1]

Such arguments manifestly tell not only against Platonism, but against every kind of transcendental realism, from the natural theology of Paley to the dogmatic agnosticism of Mr. Herbert Spencer. A modern Aristotle might say that the hypothesis of a creative first cause, personal or otherwise, logically involves the assumption of as many original specific energies as there are qualities to be accounted for, and thus gives us the unnecessary trouble of counting everything twice over; that every difficulty and contradiction from which the transcendental assumption is intended to free us, must, on analysis, reappear in the assumption itself—for example, the God who is to deliver us from evil must be himself conceived as the creator of evil; that the infinite and absolute can neither cause, nor be apprehended by, the finite and relative; that to separate from Nature all the forces required for its perpetuation, and relegate them to a sphere apart, is a false antithesis and a sterile abstraction; lastly, that causation, whether efficient or final, once begun, cannot stop; that if this world is not self-existing, nothing is; that the mutual adaptation of thoughts in a designing intelligence requires to be accounted for just like any other adaptation; that if the relative involves the absolute, so also does the relation between the two involve another absolute, and so on to infinity.

These are difficulties which will continue to perplex us until every shred of the old metaphysics has been thrown off. To that task Aristotle was not equal. He was profoundly influenced by the very theory against which he contended; and, at the risk of being paradoxical, we may even say that it assumed a greater importance in his system than had ever been attributed to it by Plato himself. To prove this, we must resume the thread of our exposition, and follow the

[1] Zeller, *Ph. d. Gr.*, II., b, 297 f.

Stagirite still further in his analysis of the fundamental reality with which the highest philosophy is concerned.

II.

Ever since the age of Parmenides and Heracleitus, Greek thought had been haunted by a pervading dualism which each system had in turn attempted to reconcile, with no better result than its reproduction under altered names. And speculation had latterly become still further perplexed by the question whether the antithetical couples supposed to divide all Nature between them could or could not be reduced to so many aspects of a single opposition. In the last chapter but one we showed that there were four such competing pairs—Being and Not-Being, the One and the Many, the Same and the Other, Rest and Motion. Plato employed his very subtlest dialectic in tracing out their connexions, readjusting their relationships, and diminishing the total number of terms which they involved. In what was probably his last great speculative effort, the *Timaeus*, he seems to have selected Sameness and Difference as the couple best adapted to bear the heaviest strain of thought. There is some reason for believing that in his spoken lectures he followed the Pythagorean system more closely, giving the preference to the One and the Many; or he may have employed the two expressions indifferently. The former would sooner commend itself to a dialectician, the latter to a mathematician. Aristotle was both, but he was before all things a naturalist. As such, the antithesis of Being and Not-Being, to which Plato attached little or no value, suited him best. Accordingly, he proceeds to work it out with a clearness before unknown in Greek philosophy. The first and surest of all principles, he declares, is, that a thing cannot both be and not be, in the same sense of the words, and furthermore that it must either be or not be. Subsequent

logicians prefixed to these axioms another, declaring that whatever is is. The three together are known as the laws of Identity, Contradiction, and Excluded Middle. By all, except Hegelians, they are recognised as the highest laws of thought; and even Hegel was indebted to them, through Fichte, for the ground-plan of his entire system.[1]

The whole meaning and value of such excessively abstract propositions must lie in their application to the problems which they are employed to solve. Aristotle made at once too much and too little of his. Too much—for he employed them to refute doctrines not really involving any logical inconsistency—the theory of Heracleitus, that everything is in motion; the theory of Anaxagoras, that everything was originally confused together; the theory of Protagoras, that man is the measure of all things. Too little—for he admitted a sphere of possibilities where logical definition did not apply, and where subjects simultaneously possessed the capacity of taking on one or other of two contradictory attributes.

Nor is this all. After sharply distinguishing what is from what is not, and refusing to admit any intermediary between them, Aristotle proceeds to discover such an intermediary in the shape of what he calls Accidental Predication.[2] An accident is an attribute not necessarily or usually inhering in its subject—in other words, a co-existence not dependent on causation. Aristotle could never distinguish between the two notions of cause and kind, nor yet between interferences with the action of some particular cause and exceptions to the law of causation in general; and so he could not frame an intelligible theory of chance. Some propositions, he tells us, are necessarily true, others are only generally true; and it is the exceptions to the latter which constitute accident; as, for instance, when a cold day happens to come in the middle

[1] *Metaph.* IV., iii. and viii.

[2] *Ibid.* VI., ii., p. 1026, b, 21.

of summer. So also a man is necessarily an animal, but only exceptionally white. Such distinctions are not uninteresting, for they prove with what difficulties the idea of invariable sequence had to contend before even the highest intellects could grasp it. There was a constant liability to confound the order of succession with the order of co-existence, the order of our sensations with the order of objective existence, and the subjection of human actions to any fixed order, with the impossibility of deliberation and choice. The earlier Greek thinkers had proclaimed that all things existed by necessity ; but with their purely geometrical or historical point of view, they entirely ignored the more complex questions raised by theories about classification, logical attribution, and moral responsibility. And the modifications introduced by Epicurus, into the old physics, show us how unanswerable Aristotle's reasonings seemed to some of his ablest successors.

Absolute being is next distinguished from truth, which, we are told, has no objective existence [1]—a remarkable declaration, which throws much light on other parts of the Aristotelian system, and to which we shall subsequently return.[2]

After explaining at considerable length what Being is not, Aristotle now proceeds to ascertain what it is. He tells us that just as all number *quâ* number must be either odd or even, so all Being *quâ* Being must have certain universal attributes. These he sets himself to discover. When Descartes long afterwards entered on a somewhat similar inquiry, he fell back on the facts of his own individual consciousness. Aristotle, on the contrary, appeals to the common consciousness of mankind as embodied in ordinary language. In how many senses do we say that a thing is ? The first answer is contained in his famous Ten Categories.[3] These

[1] *Metaph.*, VI., iv., p. 1027, b, 29. [2] *Ibid.*, VI., iv.
[3] *Ibid.*, VI., ii., *sub in.* ; VII., i., *sub in.* ; *Topic.*, I., ix.

are not what some have supposed them to be, *summa genera* of existence, but *summa genera* of predication. In other words, they are not a classification of things, but of the information which it is possible to receive about a single thing, more especially about the richest and most concrete thing known to us—a human being. If we want to find out all about a thing we ask, What is it? Of what sort? How large? To what does it belong? Where and when can we find it? What does it do? What happens to it? And if the object of our investigations be a living thing, we may add, What are its habits and dispositions? The question has been raised, how Aristotle came to think of these ten particular categories, and a wonderful amount of rubbish has been written on the subject, while apparently no scholar could see what was staring him in the face all the time, that Aristotle got them by collecting all the simple forms of interrogation supplied by the Greek language,[1] and writing out their most general expressions.

Having obtained his categories, Aristotle proceeds to mark off the first from the other nine. The subject or substance named in answer to the question, What is it? can exist without having any quality, size, and so forth predicated of it; but they cannot exist without it. Logically, they cannot be defined without telling *what* they are; really they cannot be conceived without something not themselves in

[1] These are *τί*, *ποιόν*, *ποσόν*, *ποῦ*, *ποτέ*, and *πῶς*. Τί is associated with *πρός* in the question *πρὸς τί*, which has no simple English equivalent. Apparently it was suggested to Aristotle by *ποσόν*, how much? in connexion with which it means, in relation to what standard? If we were told that a thing was double, we should ask, double what? Again, the Greeks had a simply compound question, *τί παθών*, meaning, what was the matter with him? or, what made him do it? From this Aristotle extracted *πάσχειν*, a wider notion than our passion, meaning whatever is done or happens to anything; which again would suggest *ποιεῖν*, what it does. Finally, *πῶς*, taken alone, is too vague a question for any answer, but must be taken in its simplest compounds *πῶς διακείμενον* and *πῶς ἔχον*, which give the two rarely-occurring categories *ἔχειν* and *κεῖσθαι*, for which it is on one occasion substituted (*Soph. El.*, xxii., p. 178, b, 39). Διὰ *τί* does not figure among the categories, because it is reserved for the special analysis of *οὐσία*.

which they inhere. They are like the tail of a kite, giving greater conspicuousness and buoyancy to the body, but entirely dependent on it for support. What our philosopher fails to perceive is, that the dependence is reciprocal, that substance can no more be conceived without attributes than attributes without substance; or rather that substance, like all other categories, can be resolved into Relation.[1]

Meanwhile, he had a logical machine ready to hand, which could be used with terrible effect against the Platonic Ideas. Any of these—and there were a great number—that could be brought under one of the last nine categories were at once deprived of all claim to independent existence. Take Equality, for instance. It cannot be discovered outside quantity, and quantity is always predicated of a substance. And the same is true of number, to the utter destruction of the Neo-Pythagorean theory which gave it a separate existence. Moreover, the categories served not only to generalise and combine, but also to specificate and divide. The idea of motion occurs in three of them; in quantity, where it means increase or diminution; in quality, where it means alteration, as from hot to cold, or *vice versâ*; and in place, implying transport from one point to another. The Idea of Good, which stands at the very summit of Plato's system, may be traced through all ten categories.[2] Thus, the supposed unity and simplicity of such conceptions was shown to be an illusion. Platonism was, in truth, so inconsistent with the notions embodied in common language, that it could not but be condemned by a logic based on those notions.

Aristotle next takes the Idea of Substance and subjects it to a fresh analysis.[3] Of all things none seem to possess so evident an existence as the bodies about us—plants and animals, the four elements, and the stars. But each of these

[1] As Grote has shown in his chapter on the Categories.

[2] *Eth. Nic.*, I., iv., p. 1096, a, 24, where six are enumerated.

[3] *Metaph.*, VII. *passim.*

has already been shown to consist of Form and Matter. A statue, for instance, is a lump of bronze shaped into the figure of a man. Of these two constituents, Matter seems at first sight to possess the greater reality. The same line of thought which led Aristotle to place substance before the other categories now threatens to drive him back into materialism. This he dreaded, not on sentimental or religious grounds, but because he conceived it to be the negation of knowledge. He first shows that Matter cannot be the real substance to which individuals owe their determinate existence, since it is merely the unknown residuum left behind when every predicate, common to them with others, has been stripped off. Substance, then, must be either Form alone or Form combined with Matter. Form, in its completest sense, is equivalent to the essential definition of a thing—the collection of attributes together constituting its essence or conception. To know the definition is to know the thing defined. The way to define is to begin with the most general notion, and proceed by adding one specific difference after another, until we reach the most particular and concrete expression. The union of this last with a certain portion of Matter gives us the individual Socrates or Callias. There are no real entities (as the Platonists pretend) corresponding to the successive stages of generalisation, biped, animal, and so forth, any more than there are self-existing quantities, qualities, and relations. Thus the problem has been driven into narrower and narrower limits, until at last we are left with the *infimæ species* and the individuals contained under them. It remains to discover in what relation these stand to one another. The answer is unsatisfactory. We are told that there is no definition of individuals, and also that the definition is identical with the individual.[1] Such, indeed, is the conclusion necessarily resulting from Aristotle's repeated declarations that all knowledge is of

[1] *Metaph.*, VII., vi., p. 1031, b, 18 ff.

definitions, that all knowledge is of something really existing, and that nothing really exists but individual things. Nevertheless, against these we have to set equally strong declarations to the effect that knowledge is of something general, not of the perishing individuals which may pass out of existence at any moment. The truth is, that we are here, as Zeller has shown,[1] in presence of an insoluble contradiction, and we must try to explain, not how Aristotle reconciled it with itself, for that was impossible, but how he reconciled himself to it.

His analysis of individuality was the first step in this direction. We have seen that he treats definition as a process of gradual specification, beginning with the most general notions, and working down by successive differentiations to the most particular. Now, the completed conception is itself the integration of all these differences, the bond of union holding them together. Turning to an antithetical order of ideas, to the material substance of which bodies are composed, and its various transformations, we find him working out the same vein of thought. According to the Aristotelian chemistry, an ultimate indeterminate unknowable something clothes itself with one or other of the opposing attributes, dry and moist, hot and cold; and when two of these are combined, manifests itself to our senses as one of the four elements. The elements combine in a particular manner to form homogeneous animal tissues, and these again are united into heterogeneous organs, which together constitute the living body. Here, then, we have two analogous series of specifications—one conceptual and leading down from the abstract to the concrete, the other physical, and leading up from the vague, the simple, and the homogeneous, to the definite, the complex, and the heterogeneous. Aristotle embraces both processes under a single comprehensive generalisation. He describes each of them as the continuous conversion of a

[1] Zeller, *Phil. d. Gr.*, II., b, 309.

possibility into an actuality. For the sake of greater clearness, let us take the liberty of substituting modern scientific terms for his cumbrous and obsolete classifications. We shall then say that the general notion, living thing, contains under it the two less general notions—plant and animal. If we only know of any given object that it has life, there is implied the possibility of its being either the one or the other, but not both together. On determining it to be (say) an animal, we actualise one of the possibilities. But the actualisation is only relative, and immediately becomes the possibility of being either a vertebrate or an invertebrate animal. The actuality vertebrate becomes the possibility of viviparous or oviparous, and so on through successive differentiations until we come (say) to a man. Now let us begin at the material end. Here are a mass of molecules, which, in their actual state are only carbon, nitrogen, and so forth. But they are potential starch, gluten, water, or any other article of food that might be named ; for under favourable conditions they will combine to form it. Once actualised as such, they are possible blood-cells ; these are possible tissues ; these, again, possible organs, and lastly we come to the consensus of vital functions, which is a man. What the raw material is to the finished product, that are the parts to the entire organism, the elements to the compound, the genus to the species, and such in its very widest sense is potency to realisation, δύναμις to ἐντελέχεια, throughout the universe of growth and decay.[1]

It will be observed that, so far, this famous theory does not add one single jot to our knowledge. Under the guise of an explanation, it is a description of the very facts needing to be explained. We did not want an Aristotle to tell us that before a thing exists it must be possible. We want to know how it is possible, what are the real conditions of its existence, and why they combine at a particular moment to

[1] For the general theory of Actuality and Possibility, see *Metaph.*, VIII.

produce it. The Atomists showed in what direction the solution should be sought, and all subsequent progress has been due to a development of their method. Future ages will perhaps consider our own continued distinction between force and motion as a survival of the Peripatetic philosophy. Just as sensible aggregates of matter arise not out of potential matter, but out of matter in an extremely fine state of diffusion, so also sensible motion will be universally traced back, not to potential motion, which is all that force means, but to molecular or ethereal vibrations, like those known to constitute heat and light.

We have said, in comparing him with his predecessors, that the Stagirite unrolled Greek thought from a solid into a continuous surface. We have now to add that he gave his surface the false appearance of a solid by the use of shadows, and of aërial perspective. In other words, he made the indication of his own ignorance and confusion do duty for depth and distance. For to say that a thing is developed out of its possibility, merely means that it is developed out of something, the nature of which we do not know. And to speak about such possibilities as imperfect existences, or matter, or whatever else Aristotle may be pleased to call them, is simply constructing the universe, not out of our ideas, but out of our absolute want of ideas.

We have seen how, for the antithesis between Form and Matter, was substituted the wider antithesis between Actuality and Possibility. Even in this latter the opposition is more apparent than real. A permanent possibility is only intelligible through the idea of its realisation, and sooner or later is certain to be realised. Aristotle still further bridges over the interval between them by a new conception—that of motion. Motion, he tells us, is the process of realisation, the transformation of power into act. Nearly the whole of his *Physics* is occupied with an enquiry into its nature and origin. As first conceived, it is equivalent to what we call change rather than

to mechanical movement. The table of categories supplies an exhaustive enumeration of its varieties. These are, as we have already mentioned, alteration of quality or transformation, increase or decrease of quantity, equivalent to growth and decay, and transport from place to place. Sometimes a fourth variety is added, derived from the first category, substance. He calls it generation and destruction, the coming into existence or passing out of it again. A careful analysis shows that motion in space is the primordial change on which all others depend for their accomplishment. To account for it is the most vitally important problem in philosophy.

III.

Before entering on the chain of reasoning which led Aristotle to postulate the existence of a personal First Cause, we must explain the difference between his scientific standpoint, and that which is now accepted by all educated minds. To him the eternity not only of Matter, but also of what he called Form,—that is to say, the collection of attributes giving definiteness to natural aggregates, more especially those known as organic species—was an axiomatic certainty. Every type, capable of self-propagation, that could exist at all, had existed, and would continue to exist for ever. For this, no explanation beyond the generative power of Nature was required. But when he had to account for the machinery by which the perpetual alternation of birth and death below, and the changeless revolutions of the celestial spheres above the moon were preserved, difficulties arose. He had reduced every other change to transport through space; and with regard to this his conceptions were entirely mistaken. He believed that moving matter tended to stop unless it was sustained by some external force; and whatever their advantages over him in other respects, we cannot say that the Atomists were in a position to correct him here: for their

theory, that every particle of matter gravitated downward through infinite space, was quite incompatible with the latest astronomical discoveries. Aristotle triumphantly showed that the tendency of heavy bodies was not to move indefinitely downwards in parallel lines, but to move in converging lines to the centre of the earth, which he, in common with most Greek astronomers, supposed to be also the centre of the universe ; and seeing light bodies move up, he credited them with an equal and opposite tendency to the circumference of the universe, which, like Parmenides and Plato, he believed to be of finite extent. Thus each kind of matter has its appropriate place, motion to which ends in rest, while motion away from it, being constrained, cannot last. Accordingly, the constant periodicity of terrestrial phenomena necessitates as constant a transformation of dry and wet, and of hot and cold bodies into one another. This is explained with perfect accuracy by the diurnal and annual revolutions of the sun. Here, however, we are introduced to a new kind of motion, which, instead of being rectilinear and finite, is circular and eternal. To account for it, Aristotle assumes a fifth element entirely different in character from the four terrestrial elements. Unlike them, it is absolutely simple, and has a correspondingly simple mode of motion, which, as our philosopher erroneously supposes, can be no other than circular rotation.

Out of this eternal unchanging divine substance, which he calls aether, are formed the heavenly bodies and the transparent spheres containing them. But there is something beyond it of an even higher and purer nature. Aristotle proves, with great subtlety, from his fundamental assumptions, that the movement of an extended substance cannot be self-caused. He also proves that motion must be absolutely continuous and without a beginning. We have, therefore, no choice but to accept the existence of an unextended, immaterial, eternal, and infinite Power on which the whole cosmos depends.

So much only is established in the *Physics*. Further particulars are given in the twelfth book of the *Metaphysics*. There we learn that, all movement being from possibility to actuality, the source of movement must be a completely realised actuality—pure form without any admixture of matter. But the highest form known to us in the ascending scale of organic life is the human soul, and the highest function of soul is reason. Reason then must be that which moves without being moved itself, drawing all things upwards and onwards by the love which its perfection inspires. The eternal, infinite, absolute actuality existing beyond the outermost starry sphere is God. Aristotle describes God as the thought which thinks itself and finds in the simple act of self-consciousness an everlasting happiness, wonderful if it always equals the best moments of our mortal life, more wonderful still if it surpasses them. There is only one supreme God, for plurality is due to an admixture of matter, and He is pure form. The rule of many is not good, as Homer says. Let there be one Lord.

Such are the closing words of what was possibly Aristotle's last work, the clear confession of his monotheistic creed. A monotheistic creed, we have said, but one so unlike all other religions, that its nature has been continually misunderstood. While some have found in it a theology like that of the Jews or of Plato or of modern Europe, others have resolved it into a vague pantheism. Among the latter we are surprised to find Sir A. Grant, a writer to whom the Aristotelian texts must be perfectly familiar both in spirit and in letter. Yet nothing can possibly be more clear and emphatic than the declarations they contain. Pantheism identifies God with the world ; Aristotle separates them as pure form from form more or less alloyed with matter. Pantheism denies personality to God ; Aristotle gives him unity, spirituality, self-consciousness, and happiness. If these qualities do not collectively involve personality, we should like to know what does. Need we

remind the accomplished editor of the *Nicomachean Ethics* how great a place is given in that work to human self-consciousness, to waking active thought as distinguished from mere slumbering faculties or unrealised possibilities of action? And what Aristotle regarded as essential to human perfection, he would regard as still more essential to divine perfection. Finally, the God of pantheism is a general idea; the God of Aristotle is an individual. Sir A. Grant says that he (or it) is the idea of Good.[1] We doubt very much whether there is a single passage in the *Metaphysics* to sanction such an expression. Did it occur, however, that would be no warrant for approximating the Aristotelian to the Platonic theology, in presence of such a distinct declaration as that the First Mover is both conceptually and numerically one,[2] coming after repeated repudiations of the Platonic attempt to isolate ideas from the particulars in which they are immersed, Then Sir A. Grant goes on to speak of the desire felt by Nature for God as being itself God,[3] and therefore involving a belief in pantheism. Such a notion is not generally called pantheism, but hylozoism, the attribution of life to matter. We have no desire, however, to quarrel about words. The philosopher who believes in the existence of a vague consciousness, a spiritual effort towards something higher diffused through nature, may, if you will, be called a pantheist, but not unless this be the only divinity he recognises. The term is altogether misleading when applied to one who also proclaims the existence of something in his opinion far higher, better and more real—a living God, who transcends Nature, and is independent of her, although she is not independent of him.

We must also observe that the parallel drawn by Sir A. Grant between the theology of Aristotle and that of John Stuart Mill is singularly unfortunate. It is in the first place incorrect to say that Mill represented God as benevolent but

[1] Grant's *Aristotle*, p. 176. [2] *Metaph.*, XII., viii., p. 1074, a, 36.
[3] Grant's *Aristotle*, p. 176.

not omnipotent. He only suggested the idea as less inconsistent with facts than other forms of theism.[1] In the next place, Aristotle's God was almost exactly the reverse of this. He possesses infinite power, but no benevolence at all. He has nothing to do with the internal arrangements of the world, either as creator or as providence. He is, in fact, an egoist of the most transcendent kind, who does nothing but think about himself and his own perfections. Nothing could be more characteristic of the unpractical Aristotelian philosophy; nothing more repugnant to the eager English reformer, the pupil of Bentham and of Plato. And, thirdly, Sir A. Grant takes what is not the God of Aristotle's system at all, but a mere abstraction, the immanent reason of Nature, the Form which can never quite conquer Matter, and places it on the same line with a God who, however hypothetical, is nothing if not a person distinct from the world; while, as if to bewilder the unfortunate 'English reader' still further, he adds, in the very next sentence, that 'the great defect in Aristotle's conception of God is' the denial 'that God can be a moral Being.'[2]

The words last quoted, which in a Christian sense are true enough, lead us over to the contrasting view of Aristotle's theology, to the false theory of it held by critics like Prof. St. George Mivart. The Stagirite agrees with Catholic theism in accepting a personal God, and he agrees with the First Article of the English Church, though not with the Pentateuch, in saying that God is without parts or passions; but there his agreement ceases. Excluding such a thing as divine interference with nature, his theology of course excludes the possibility of revelation, inspiration, miracles, and grace. Nor is this a mere omission; it is a necessity of the system. If there can

[1] 'The rational attitude of a thinking mind towards the supernatural, whether in natural or revealed religion, is that of scepticism, as distinguished from belief on the one hand and atheism on the other.'—Mill's *Essays on Religion*, p. 242.

[2] Grant's *Aristotle*, p. 177.

be no existence without time, no time without motion, no motion without unrealised desire, no desire without an ideal, no ideal but eternally self-thinking thought—then it logically follows that God, in the sense of such a thought, must not interest himself in the affairs of men. Again, Aristotelianism equally excludes the arguments by which modern theologians have sought to prove the existence of God. Here also the system is true to its contemporaneous, statical, superficial character. The First Mover is not separated from us by a chain of causes extending through past ages, but by an intervening breadth of space and the wheels within wheels of a cosmic machine. Aristotle had no difficulty in conceiving what some have since declared to be inconceivable, a series of antecedents without any beginning in time; it was rather the beginning of such a series that he could not make intelligible to himself. Nor, as we have seen, did he think that the adaptation in living organisms of each part to every other required an external explanation. Far less did it occur to him that the production of impressions on our senses was due to the agency of a supernatural power. It is absolutely certain that he would have rejected the Cartesian argument, according to which a perfect being must exist if it be only conceivable—existence being necessarily involved in the idea of perfection.[1] Finally, not recognising such a faculty as conscience, he would not have admitted it to be the voice of God speaking in the soul.

On the other hand, Aristotle's own theistic arguments cannot stand for a moment in the face of modern science. We know by the law of inertia that it is not the continuance, but the arrest or the beginning of motion which requires to be accounted for. We know by the Copernican system that there is no solid sidereal sphere governing the revolutions of all Nature. And we know by the Newtonian physics that

[1] ὁ δ' εἶναι οὐκ οὐσία οὐδενί· οὐ γὰρ γένος τὸ ὄν.—*An. Post.*, II., vii., p. 92, b, 13.

gravitation is not dependent on fixed points in space for its operation. *The* Philosophy of *the* Philosopher Aristotle is as inconsistent with the demonstrations of modern astronomy as it is with the faith of mediaeval Catholicism.

It remains to be seen whether the system which we are examining is consistent with itself. It is not. The Prime Mover, being unextended, cannot be located outside the sidereal sphere; nor can he be brought into immediate contact with it more than with any other part of the cosmos. If the aether has a motion proper to itself, then no spiritual agency is required to keep it in perpetual rotation. If the crystalline spheres fit accurately together, as they must, to avoid leaving a vacuum anywhere, there can be no friction, no production of heat, and consequently no effect produced on the sublunary sphere. Finally, no rotatory or other movement can, taken alone, have any conceivable connexion with the realisation of a possibility, in the sense of progress from a lower to a higher state of being. It is merely the perpetual exchange of one indifferent position for another.

We have now to consider what were the speculative motives that led Aristotle to overlook these contradictions, and to find rest in a theory even less satisfactory than the earlier systems which he is always attacking with relentless animosity. The first motive, we believe, was the train of reasoning, already laid before the reader, by which universal essences, the objects of knowledge, gradually came to be identified with particular objects, the sole existing realities. For the arguments against such an identification, as put forward by our philosopher himself, still remained unanswered. The individuals comprising a species were still too transient for certainty and too numerous for comprehension. But when for the antithesis between Form and Matter was substituted the antithesis between Actuality and Possibility, two modes of evasion presented themselves. The first was to distinguish between actual knowledge and potential knowledge.

The former corresponded to existing particulars, the latter to general ideas.[1] This, however, besides breaking up the unity of knowledge, was inconsistent with the whole tenor of Aristotle's previous teaching. What can be more actual than demonstration, and how can there be any demonstration of transient particulars? The other mode of reconciliation was perhaps suggested by the need of an external cause to raise Possibility into Actuality. Such a cause might be conceived with all the advantages and without the drawbacks of a Platonic Idea. It would be at once the moving agent and the model of perfection; it could reconcile the general and the particular by the simple fact of being eternal in time, comprehensive in space, and unique in kind. Aristotle found such a cause, or rather a whole series of such causes, in the celestial spheres. In his system, these bear just the same relation to terrestrial phenomena that Plato's Ideas bear to the world of sense. They are, in fact, the Ideas made sensible and superficial, placed alongside of, instead of beneath or behind, the transient particulars which they irradiate and sustain.

The analogy may be carried even farther. If Plato regarded the things of sense as not merely a veil, but an imperfect imitation of the only true realities; so also did Aristotle represent the sublunary elements as copying the disposition and activities of the ethereal spheres. They too have their concentric arrangements—first fire, then air, then water, and lastly earth in the centre; while their perpetual transformation into one another presents an image in time of the spatial rotation which those sublime beings perform. And although we think that Sir A. Grant is quite mistaken in identifying Aristotle's Supreme Mind with the Idea of Good, there can be no doubt of its having been suggested by that Idea. It is, in fact, the translation of Plato's abstraction into concrete reality, and the completion of a process which Plato

[1] *Metaph.*, XIII., x.

had himself begun. From another point of view we may say that both master and disciple were working, each in his own way, at the solution of a problem which entirely dominates Greek philosophy from Empedocles on—the reconciliation of Parmenides and Heracleitus, Being and Becoming, the eternal and the changeful, the one and the many. Aristotle adopts the superficial, external method of placing the two principles side by side in space; and for a long time the world accepted his solution for the same reason that had commended it to his own acceptance, its apparent agreement with popular tradition and with the facts of experience. It must be confessed, however, that here also he was following the lines laid down by Plato. The *Timaeus* and the *Laws* are marked by a similar tendency to substitute astronomy for dialectics, to study the celestial movements with religious veneration, to rebuild on a scientific basis that ancient star-worship which, even among the Greeks, enjoyed a much higher authority and prestige than the humanised mythology of the poets. But for Christianity this star-worship would probably have become the official faith of the Roman world. As it is, Dante's great poem presents us with a singular compromise between the two creeds. The crystalline spheres are retained, only they have become the abode of glorified spirits instead of being the embodiment of eternal gods. We often hear it said that the Copernican system was rejected as offensive to human pride, because it removed the earth from the centre of the universe. This is a profound mistake. Its offence was to degrade the heavenly bodies by assimilating them to the earth.[1] Among several planets, all revolving round the sun, there could not be any marked qualitative difference. In the theological sense there was no longer any heaven; and with the disappearance of the solid

[1] Non pensar oltre lei [la terra] essere un corpo senza alma e vita et anche feccia tra le sustanze corporali.' Giordano Bruno, *Cena de le Ceneri*, p. 130 (*Opere*, ed. Wagner). 'Non dovete stimar. . . che il corpo terreno sia vile e più degli altri ignobile.'—*De l' Infinito Universo e Mondi*, p. 54 (*ib.*).

sidereal sphere there was no longer any necessity for a Prime Mover.

There is, perhaps, no passage in Aristotle's writings—there is certainly none in his scientific writings—more eloquent than that which describes the glory of his imaginary heavens. The following translation may give some faint idea of its solemnity and splendour :—

We believe, then, that the whole heaven is one and everlasting, without beginning or end through all eternity, but holding infinite time within its orb; not, as some say, created or capable of being destroyed. We believe it on account of the grounds already stated, and also on account of the consequences resulting from a different hypothesis. For, it must add great weight to our assurance of its immortality and everlasting duration that this opinion may, while the contrary opinion cannot possibly, be true. Wherefore, we may trust the traditions of old time. and especially of our own race, when they tell us that there is something deathless and divine about the things which, although moving, have a movement that is not bounded, but is itself the universal bound, a perfect circle enclosing in its revolutions the imperfect motions that are subject to restraint and arrest ; while this, being without beginning or end or rest through infinite time, is the one from which all others originate, and into which they disappear. That heaven which antiquity assigned to the gods as an immortal abode, is shown by the present argument to be uncreated and indestructible, exempt alike from mortal weakness and from the weariness of subjection to a force acting in opposition to its natural inclination ; for in proportion to its everlasting continuance such a compulsion would be laborious, and unparticipant in the highest perfection of design. We must not, then, believe with the old mythologists that an Atlas is needed to uphold it; for they, like some in more recent times, fancied that the heavens were made of heavy earthy matter, and so fabled an animated necessity for their support ; nor yet that, as Empedocles says, they will last only so long as their own proper momentum is exceeded by the whirling motion of which they partake.[1] Nor, again, is it likely that their everlasting revolution can be kept up by the exercise of a conscious will ;

[1] This conjecture of Empedocles deserves more attention than it has as yet received. It illustrates once more the superior insight of the early thinkers as compared with Aristotle.

for no soul could lead a happy and blessed existence that was engaged in such a task, necessitating, as it would, an unceasing struggle with their native tendency to move in a different direction, without even the mental relaxation and bodily rest which mortals gain by sleep, but doomed to the eternal torment of an Ixion's wheel. Our explanation, on the other hand, is, as we say, not only more consistent with the eternity of the heavens, but also can alone be reconciled with the acknowledged vaticinations of religious faith.[1]

It will be seen from the foregoing passage how strong a hold the old Greek notion of an encircling limit had on the mind of Aristotle, and how he transformed it back from the high intellectual significance given to it by Plato into its original sense of a mere space-enclosing figure. And it will also be seen how he credits his spheres with a full measure of that moving power which, according to his rather unfair criticism, the Platonic Ideas did not possess. His astronomy also supplied him with that series of graduated transitions between two extremes in which Greek thought so much delighted. The heavenly bodies mediate between God and the earth; partly active and partly passive, they both receive and communicate the moving creative impulse. The four terrestrial elements are moved in the various categories of substance, quantity, quality, and place; the aether moves in place only. God remains 'without variableness or shadow of a change.' Finally, by its absolute simplicity and purity, the aether mediates between the coarse matter perceived by our senses and the absolutely immaterial Nous, and is itself supposed to be pervaded by a similar gradation of fineness from top to bottom. Furthermore, the upper fire, which must not be confounded with flame, furnishes a connecting link between the aether and the other elements, being related to them as Form to Matter, or as agent to patient; and, when the elements are decomposed into their constituent qualities, hot and cold occupy a similar position with regard to wet and dry.

[1] *De Coelo*, II., 1.

IV.

In mastering Aristotle's cosmology, we have gained the key to his entire method of systematisation. Henceforth, the Stagirite has no secrets from us. Where we were formerly content to show that he erred, we can now show why he erred; by generalising his principles of arrangement, we can exhibit them still more clearly in their conflict with modern thought. The method, then, pursued by Aristotle is to divide his subject into two more or less unequal masses, one of which is supposed to be governed by necessary principles, admitting of certain demonstration; while the other is irregular, and can only be studied according to the rules of probable evidence. The parts of the one are homogeneous and concentrically disposed, the movements of each being controlled by that immediately outside and above it. The parts of the other are heterogeneous and distributed among a number of antithetical pairs, between whose members there is, or ought to be, a general equilibrium preserved, the whole system having a common centre which either oscillates from one extreme to another, or holds the balance between them. The second system is enclosed within the first, and is altogether dependent on it for the impulses determining its processes of metamorphosis and equilibration. Where the internal adjustments of a system to itself or of one system to the other are not consciously made, Aristotle calls them Nature. They are always adapted to secure its everlasting continuance either in an individual or a specific form. Actuality belongs more particularly to the first sphere, and possibility to the second, but both are, to a certain extent, represented in each.

We have already seen how this fundamental division is applied to the universe as a whole. But our philosopher is not content with classifying the phenomena as he finds

them; he attempts to demonstrate the necessity of their dual existence; and in so doing is guilty of something very like a vicious circle. For, after proving from the terrestrial movements that there must be an eternal movement to keep them going, he now assumes the revolving aether, and argues that there must be a motionless solid centre for it to revolve round, although a geometrical axis would have served the purpose equally well. By a still more palpable fallacy, he proceeds to show that a body whose tendency is towards the centre, must, in the nature of things, be opposed by another body whose tendency is towards the circumference. In order to fill up the interval created by this opposition, two intermediate bodies are required, and thus we get the four elements—earth, water, air, and fire. These, again, are resolved into the antithetical couples, dry and wet, hot and cold, the possible combinations of which, by twos, give us the four elements once more. Earth is dry and cold, water cold and wet, air wet and hot, fire hot and dry; each adjacent pair having a quality in common, and each element being characterised by the excess of a particular quality; earth is especially dry, water cold, air wet, and fire hot. The common centre of each antithesis is what Aristotle calls the First Matter, the mere abstract unformed possibility of existence. This matter always combines two qualities, and has the power of oscillating from one quality to another, but it cannot, as a rule, simultaneously exchange both for their opposites. Earth may pass into water, exchanging dry for wet, but not so readily into air, which would necessitate a double exchange at the same moment.

Those who will may see in all this an anticipation of chemical substitution and double decomposition. We can assure them that it will be by no means the most absurd parallel discovered between ancient and modern ideas. It is possible, however, to trace a more real connexion between the Aristotelian physics and mediaeval thought. We do not of

course mean the scholastic philosophy, for there never was the slightest doubt as to its derivation; we allude to the alchemy and astrology which did duty for positive science during so many centuries, and even overlapped it down to the time of Newton, himself an ardent alchemist. The superstitions of astrology originated independently of the peripatetic system, and probably long before it, but they were likely to be encouraged by it instead of being repressed, as they would have been by a less anthropomorphic philosophy. Aristotle himself, as we have seen, limited the action of the heavens on the sublunary sphere to their heating power; but, by crediting them with an immortal reason and the pursuit of ends unknown to us, he opened a wide field for conjecture as to what those ends were, and how they could be ascertained. That the stars and planets were always thinking and acting, but never about our affairs, was not a notion likely to be permanently accepted. Neither was it easy to believe that their various configurations, movements, and names (the last probably revealed by themselves) were entirely without significance. From such considerations to the casting of horoscopes is not a far remove. The Aristotelian chemistry would still more readily lend itself to the purposes of alchemy. If Nature is one vast process of transmutation, then particular bodies, such as the metals, not only may, but must be convertible into one another. And even those who rejected Aristotle's logic with scorn still clung to his natural philosophy when it flattered their hopes of gain. Bacon kept the theory of substantial forms. His originality consisted in looking for a method by which any form, or assemblage of forms might be superinduced at pleasure on the underlying matter. The real development of knowledge pursued a far different course. The great discoverers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries achieved their success by absolutely reversing the method of Aristotle, by bringing into fruitful contact principles which he had condemned to barren isolation.

They carried terrestrial physics into the heavens; they brought down the absoluteness and eternity of celestial law to earth; they showed that Aristotle's antithetical qualities were merely quantitative distinctions. These they resolved into modes of motion; and they also resolved all motions into one, which was both rectilinear and perpetual. But they and their successors put an end to all dreams of transmutation, when they showed by another synthesis that all matter, at least within the limits of our experience, has the changeless consistency once attributed exclusively to the stellar spheres.

When Aristotle passes from the whole cosmos to the philosophy of life, his method of systematic division is less distinctly illustrated, but still it may be traced. The fundamental separation is between body and soul. The latter has a wider meaning than what we associate with it at present. It covers the psychic functions and the whole life of the organism, which, again, is not what we mean by life. For life with us is both individual and collective; it resides in each speck of protoplasm, and also in the consensus of the whole organism. With Aristotle it is more exclusively a central principle, the final cause of the organism, the power which holds it together, and by which it was originally shaped. Biology begins by determining the idea of the whole, and then considers the means by which it is realised. The psychic functions are arranged according to a system of teleological subordination. The lower precedes the higher in time, but is logically necessitated by it. Thus nutrition, or the vegetative life in general, must be studied in close connexion with sensation and impulse, or animal life; and this, again, with thought or pure reasoning. On the other hand, anatomy and physiology are considered from a purely chemical and mechanical point of view. A vital purpose is, indeed, assigned to every organ, but with no more reference to its specifically vital properties than if it formed part of a steam engine. Here, as always with Aristotle, the idea of moderation determines the point of view

whence the inferior or material system is to be studied. Organic tissue is made up of the four elemental principles—hot, cold, wet, and dry—mixed together in proper proportions; and the object of organic function is to maintain them in due equilibrium, an end effected by the regulating power of the soul, which, accordingly, has its seat in the heart or centre of the body. It has been already shown how, in endeavouring to work out this chimerical theory, Aristotle went much further astray from the truth than sundry other Greek physiologists less biassed by the requirements of a symmetrical method.

After the formal and material elements of life have been separately discussed, there comes an account of the process by which they are first brought into connexion, for this is how Aristotle views generation. With him it is the information of matter by psychic force; and his notions about the part which each parent plays in the production of a new being are vitiated throughout by this mistaken assumption. Nevertheless his treatise on the subject is, for its time, one of the most wonderful works ever written, and, as we are told on good authority,[1] is now less antiquated than the corresponding researches of Harvey. The philosopher's peculiar genius for observation, analysis, and comparison will partly account for his success; but, if we mistake not, there is another and less obvious reason. Here the fatal separation of form and matter was, except at first starting, precluded by the very idea of generation; and the teleological principle of spontaneous efforts to realise a predetermined end was, as it happened, perfectly in accordance with the facts themselves.

And now, looking back on his cosmolgy, we can see that Aristotle was never so near the truth as when he tried to bridge over the gulf between his two spheres, the one corruptible and the other eternal, by the idea of motion considered as a specific property of all matter, and persisting through all

[1] Lewes, quoted by Zeller, p. 524.

time; as a link between the celestial revolutions and the changes occurring on or near the earth's surface; and, finally, as the direct cause of heat, the great agent acting in opposition to gravity—which last view may have suggested Bacon's capital discovery, that heat is itself a mode of motion.

Another method by which Aristotle strove to overcome the antithesis between life as a mechanical arrangement and life as a metaphysical conception, was the newly created study of comparative anatomy. The variations in structure and function which accompany variations in the environment, though statically and not dynamically conceived, bring us very near to the truth that biological phenomena are subject to the same general laws of causation as all other phenomena; and it is this truth which, in the science of life, corresponds to the identification of terrestrial with celestial physics in the science of general mechanics. Vitality is not an individualised principle stationed in the heart and serving only to balance opposite forces against one another; but it is diffused through all the tissues, and bestows on them that extraordinary plasticity which responds to the actions of the environment by spontaneous variations capable of being summed up in any direction, and so creating entirely new organic forms without the intervention of any supernatural agency.

V.

We have now to consider how Aristotle treats psychology, not in connexion with biology, but as a distinct science—a separation not quite consistent with his own definition of soul, but forced on him by the traditions of Greek philosophy and by the nature of things. Here the fundamental antithesis assumes a three-fold form. First the theoretical activity of mind is distinguished from its practical activity; the one being exercised on things which cannot, the other on things which

can, be changed. Again, a similar distinction prevails within the special province of each. Where truth is the object, knowledge stands opposed to sense; where good is sought, reason rises superior to passion. The one antithesis had been introduced into philosophy by the early physicists, the other by Socrates. They were confounded in the psychology of Plato, and Aristotle had the merit of separating them once more. Yet even he preserves a certain artificial parallelism between them by using the common name Nous, or reason, to denote the controlling member in each. To make his anthropology still more complex, there is a third antithesis to be taken into account, that between the individual and the community, which also sometimes slides into a partial coincidence with the other two.

Aristotle's treatise on the soul is mainly devoted to a description of the theoretical faculties—sense, and thought or reason. By sense we become acquainted with the material qualities of things; by thought with their forms or ideas. It has been already mentioned that, according to our philosopher, the organism is a system of contrary forces held in equilibrium by the soul, whose seat he supposes to be in the heart. We now learn that every sensation is a disturbance of this equilibrium. In other words, the sensorium being virtually any and every mode of matter, is raised from possibility to actuality by the presence of some one force, such as heat or cold, in sufficient strength to incline the balance that way. Here we have, quite in Aristotle's usual style, a description instead of an explanation. The atomic notion of thin films thrown off from the object of sense, and falling on the organs of sight or touch, was but a crude guess; still it has more affinity with the discoveries of a Young or a Helmholtz than scholastic phrases about potentiality and actuality. That sensation implies a disturbance of equilibrium is, indeed, an important truth; only, the equilibrium must be conceived as a balance, not of possible sensations, but of molecular states; that is to say, it must be interpreted according to the atomic theory.

Aristotle is more successful when he proceeds to discuss the imagination. He explains it to be a continuance of the movement originally communicated by the felt object to the organ of sense, kept up in the absence of the object itself;—as near an approach to the truth as could be made in his time. And he is also right in saying that the operations of reason are only made possible by the help of what he calls phantasms—that is, faint reproductions of sensations. In addition to this, he points out the connexion between memory and imagination, and enumerates the laws of association briefly, but with great accuracy. He is, however, altogether unaware of their scope. So far from using them to explain all the mental processes, he does not even see that they account for involuntary reminiscence, and limits them to the voluntary operation by which we recall a missing name or other image to consciousness.

So far, Aristotle regards the soul as a function, or energy, or perfection of the body, from which it can no more be separated than vision from the eye. It is otherwise with the part of mind which he calls Nous, or Reason—the faculty which takes cognisance of abstract ideas or the pure forms of things. This corresponds, in the microcosm, to the eternal Nous of the macrocosm, and, like it, is absolutely immaterial, not depending for its activity on the exercise of any bodily organ. There is, however, a general analogy between sensation and thought considered as processes of cognition. Previous to experience, the Nous is no thought in particular, but merely a possibility of thinking, like a smooth wax tablet waiting to be written on. It is determined to some particular idea by contact with the objective forms of things, and in this determination is raised from power to actuality. The law of moderation, however, does not apply to thought. Excessive stimulation is first injurious and then destructive to the organs of sense, but we cannot have too much of an idea; the more intense it is the better are we able to conceive all the

ideas that come under it, just because ideation is an incorporeal process. And there seems to be this further distinction between sensation and thought, that the latter is much more completely identified with its object than the former; it is in the very act of imprinting themselves on the Nous that the forms of things become perfectly detached from matter, and so attain their final realisation. It is only in our consciousness that the eternal ideas of transient phenomena become conscious of themselves. Such, we take it, is the true interpretation of Aristotle's famous distinction between an active and a passive Nous. The one, he tells us, *makes* whatever the other is *made*. The active Nous is like light raising colours from possibility to actuality. It is eternal, but we have no remembrance of its past existence, because the passive Nous, without which it can think nothing, is perishable.

It will be seen that we do not consider the two kinds of Nous to differ from each other as a higher and a lower faculty. This, in our opinion, has been the great mistake of the commentators, of those, at least, who do not identify the active Nous with God, or with some agency emanating from God—a hypothesis utterly inconsistent with Aristotle's theology. They describe it as a faculty, and as concerned with some higher kind of knowledge than what lies within the reach of the passive Nous.[1] But with Aristotle faculty is always a potentiality and a passive recipient, whereas the creative reason is expressly declared to be an actuality, which, in this connexion, can mean nothing but an individual idea. The difficulty is to understand why the objective forms of things should suddenly be spoken of as existing within the mind, and denominated by a term carrying with it such subjective associations as Nous; a difficulty not diminished by the mysterious comparison with light in its relation to colour, an illus-

[1] So Trendelenburg, Brandis, Kampe, and apparently also Zeller. Grote speaks of it rather vaguely as an intelligence pervading the celestial sphere. Schwegler vacillates between the theological and the psychological explanation.

tration which, in this instance, has only made the darkness visible. We believe that Aristotle was led to express himself as he did by the following considerations. He began by simply conceiving that, just as the senses were raised from potency to actuality through contact with the corresponding qualities in external objects, so also was the reasoning faculty moulded into particular thoughts through contact with the particular things embodying them; thus, for instance, it was led to conceive the general idea of straightness by actual experience of straight lines. It then, perhaps, occurred to him that one and the same object could not produce two such profoundly different impressions as a sensation and a thought; that mind was opposed to external realities by the attribute of self-consciousness; and that a form inherent in matter could not directly impress itself on an immaterial substance. The idea of a creative Nous was, we think, devised in order to escape from these perplexities. The ideal forms of things are carried into the mind, together with the sensations, and in passing through the imagination, become purified from the matter previously associated with them. Thus they may be conceived as part of the mind—in, though not yet of it—and as acting on its highest faculty, the passive Nous. And, by a kind of anticipation, they are called by the name of what they become completely identified with in cognition. As forms of things they are eternal; as thoughts they are self-conscious; while, in both capacities, they are creative, and their creative activity is an essentially immaterial process. Here we have the old confusion between form and function; the old inability to reconcile the claims of the universal and the particular in knowledge and existence. After all, Aristotle is obliged to extract an actuality from the meeting of two possibilities, instead of from the meeting of an actuality and a possibility. Probably the weakness of his own theory did not escape him, for he never subsequently recurs to it.[1]

[1] The last chapter of the *Posterior Analytics* sets forth a much more developed

Aristotle's work on reproduction is supposed by many to contain a reference to his distinction between the two Reasons, but we are convinced that this is a mistake. What we are told is that at the very first formation of a new being, the vegetative soul, being an exclusively corporeal function, is precontained in the elements furnished by the female; that the sensitive soul is contributed by the male (being, apparently, engendered in the semen by the vital heat of the parent organism); and, finally, that the rational soul, although entirely immaterial, is also carried in with the semen, into which it has first been introduced from without, but where, or when, or how is not more particularly specified.[1] But even were the genetic theory in question perfectly cleared up, it would still throw no light on the distinction between active and passive reason, as the latter alone can be understood by the rational soul to which it refers. For we are expressly informed —what indeed hardly required to be stated—that the embryonic souls exist not in act but in potency.[2] It seems, therefore, that Mr. Edwin Wallace is doubly mistaken when he quotes a sentence from this passage in justification of his statement, that 'Aristotle would seem almost to identify' the creative reason 'with God as the eternal and omnipresent thinker;'[3] first, because it does not refer to the creative Nous at all; and, secondly, because, if it did, the words would not stand the meaning which he puts upon them.[4]

and definite theory of the process by which general ideas are formed. We think that it was composed at a considerably later date than the rest of the work, and probably after the treatise on the Soul, to which we should almost suspect an allusion in the word πάλαι (p. 100, a, 14), did philology permit. The reference can hardly be to the first part of the chapter (as is generally supposed); nor has the subject under discussion been touched on in any other part of the *Analytics*.

[1] Grote and Kampe think that Aristotle assigns a portion of aether as an extended, if not precisely a material, substratum to the rational soul; but the arguments of Zeller (p. 569) seem decisive against this view.

[2] *De Gen. An.*, II., iii., p. 736, b, 15.

[3] *Outlines of the Philosophy of Aristotle*, p. 45.

[4] The word θεῖον, at any rate, does not mean 'almost God,' for Aristotle applies it to the intelligence of bees, and also to the heavenly bodies (*De Gen. An.*, III., x., p. 761, a, 5; *De Coelo*, II., xii., p. 292, b, 32).

But if even so little as this remains unproved, what are we to think of the astounding assertion, that 'Aristotle's theory of a creative reason, fragmentary as that theory is left, is the answer to all materialistic theories of the universe. To Aristotle, as to a subtle Scottish preacher,[1] "the real presupposition of all knowledge, or the thought which is the *prius* of all things, is not the individual's consciousness of himself as individual, but a thought or self-consciousness which is beyond all individual selves, which is the unity of all individual selves, and their objects, of all thinkers and all objects of thought."'[2] How can materialism or anything else be possibly refuted by a theory which is so obscurely set forth that no two interpreters are able to agree in their explanation of it? And even were it stated with perfect clearness and fulness, how can any hypothesis be refuted by a mere dogmatic declaration of Aristotle? Are we back in the Middle Ages that his *ipse dixit* is to decide questions now raised with far ampler means of discussion than he could possess? As to Principal Caird's metaphysics, we have no wish to dispute their theoretic accuracy, and can only admire the liberality of a Church in which propositions so utterly destructive of traditional orthodoxy are allowed to be preached. But one thing we are certain of, and that is, that whether or not they are consistent with Christian theism, they are utterly inconsistent with Aristotelian principles. Which is the 'thought or self-consciousness' referred to, a possibility or an actuality? If the former, it is not a *prius*, nor is it the creative reason. If the latter, it cannot transcend all or any individual selves, for, with Aristotle, individuals are the sole reality, and the supreme being of his system is pre-eminently individual; neither can it unify them, for, according to Aristotle, two things which are two in actuality cannot be one in actuality.[3]

We now turn to Sir A. Grant, who, as was mentioned at

[1] Principal Caird. [2] *Outlines*, Preface, p. viii.
[3] *Metaph.*, VII., xiii., p. 1039, a, 4.

the beginning of the last chapter, makes Aristotle a supporter of the late Prof. Ferrier. We will state the learned Principal's view in his own words :—

'His utterances on this subject [the existence of an external world] are perhaps chiefly to be found in the third book of his treatise "On the Soul," beginning with the fourth chapter. On turning to them we see that he never separates existence from knowledge. "A thing in actual existence," he says, "is identical with the knowledge of that thing." Again, "The possible existence of a thing is identical with the possibility in us of perceiving or knowing it." Thus, until a thing is perceived or known, it can only be said to have a potential or possible existence. And from this a doctrine very similar to that of Ferrier might be deduced, that "nothing exists except *plus* me,"—that is to say, in relation to some mind perceiving it.' (*Aristotle*, p. 165.)

After much searching, we have not been able to find the originals of the two passages quoted by Sir A. Grant. We have, however, found others setting forth the doctrine of Natural Realism with a clearness which leaves nothing to be desired. Aristotle tells us that former naturalists were wrong when they said that there could be no black or white without vision, and no taste without tasting ; that is, they were right about the actuality, and wrong about the possibility ; for, as he explains, our sensations are produced by the action of external bodies on the appropriate organs, the activity being the same while the existence is different. A sonorous body produces a sound in our hearing ; the sound perceived and the action of the body are identical, but not their existence ; for, he adds, the hearer need not be always listening, nor the sonorous body sounding ; and so with all the other senses.[1]

This is not making the *percipi* of objects their *esse*. Again, in the eighth chapter he tells us that the soul is 'in a certain way' (πως) all things, since all things are either sensible or cogitable ; and then he proceeds to explain what is meant by

[1] *De An.*, III., ii., p. 426, a, 20 ; 425, b, 25 ff. What Aristotle means by saying that the εἶναι of object and sensation is not the same, appears from a passage in his tract on Memory (p. 450, b, 20), where he employs the illustration of a portrait and its original, which are the same, although their εἶναι is different.

'in a certain way.' Sense and knowledge are distributed over things in such wise that their possibility is the possibility, and their actuality the actuality, of the things. They must, then, be either the things themselves or their forms. '*But the things themselves they are surely not*, for the stone is not in the soul, but its form.' In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle expresses himself to the same effect, but even more explicitly. Criticising the Protagorean doctrine, he reduces it to an absurdity by urging that if there were nothing but sensibles, then nothing at all could exist in the absence of animated beings, for without them there would be no sensation. He admits that in the case supposed there would be neither feelings nor felt objects, since these presuppose a sentient subject; but adds, that for the substances (*τὰ ὑποκείμενα*) which produce the feeling not to exist is impossible; 'for there is something else besides the feeling which must necessarily exist before it.'[1] And immediately afterwards he clinches the argument by observing that if appearances were the only truth, there would be no independent existences, and everything would be relative, since appearances exist only in relation to some one to whom they appear. Now we need hardly say that this universal relativity was precisely what Ferrier contended for.

Sir A. Grant is on stronger, or rather on more inaccessible ground, when he uses the distinction between the two reasons as involving a sort of idealistic theory, because here Aristotle's meaning is much less clearly expressed. Yet, if our interpretation be the correct one, if the creative Nous simply means the forms of things acting through the imagination on the possibilities of subjective conception, Aristotle's view will be exactly the reverse of that contended for by Sir Alexander; thought, instead of moulding, will itself be moulded by external reality. In no case have we a right to set an obscure and disputed passage against Aristotle's distinct, emphatic, and reiterated declarations, that sensation and ideation are

[1] *Metaph.*, IV., v., *sub fin.*

substantially analogous processes, taken together with his equally distinct declaration, that the objects of sensation are independent of our feelings. We think, indeed, that Sir A. Grant will find, on reconsideration, that he is proving too much. For, if the things which reason creates were external to the mind, then Aristotle would go at least as far as those 'extreme German idealists' from whom his expositor is anxious to separate him. Finally, we would observe that to set up Aristotle's distinction between form and matter in opposition to the materialistic theories of the present day, shows a profound misconception of its meaning. Form and matter are nowhere distinguished from one another as subject and object. Form simply means the attributes of a thing, the entire aggregate of its differential characteristics. But that this does not of itself amount to conscious reason we are told by Aristotle himself.[1] On the other hand, the 'matter' to which 'some philosophers' attribute 'an independent existence,' is not his 'matter' at all, but just the sum of things *minus* consciousness. The Stagirite did not, it is true, believe in the possibility of such a universe, but only (as we have shown) because he was not acquainted with the highest laws of motion. Yet, even taking 'matter' in his own technical sense, Aristotle would have agreed with Prof. Tyndall, that it contained the promise and the potency of all future life, reason alone excepted. He tells us very clearly that the sensitive soul is a somatic function, something which, although not body, belongs to body; and this we conceive is all that any materialist would now contend for.[2] And having gone so far, there really was nothing to prevent him from going a step farther, had he only been acquainted with the dependence of all intelligence on nervous action. At any rate, the tendency is now to obliterate the distinction where he drew it, and to substitute for it another distinction which he neglected. While all functions of consciousness, from the most elementary

[1] *De An.*, III., iv., *sub fin.* [2] *De An.*, II., ii., p. 414, a, 20.

sensation to the most complex reasoning, seem to pass into one another by imperceptible gradations, consciousness in general is still separated from objective existence by an impassable chasm; and if there is any hope of reconciling them it lies in the absolute idealism which he so summarily rejected. What we have had occasion repeatedly to point out in other departments of his system, is verified once more in his psychology. The progress of thought has resulted from a reunion of the principles between which he drew a rigid demarcation. We have found that perception can only be understood as a process essentially homogeneous with the highest thought, and neither more nor less immaterial than it is. On the objective side, both may be resolved into sensori-motor actions; on the subjective side, into groups of related feelings. And here, also, we have to note that when Aristotle anticipates modern thought, it is through his one great mediating, synthetic conception. He observes incidentally that our knowledge of size and shape is acquired, not through the special senses, but by motion—an aperçu much in advance of Locke.[1]

If there are any who value Aristotle as a champion of spiritualism, they must take him with his encumbrances. If his philosophy proves that one part of the soul is immaterial, it proves equally that the soul, taking it altogether, is perishable. Not only does he reject Plato's metempsychosis as inconsistent with physiology, but he declares that affection, memory, and reasoning are functions not of the eternal Nous, but of the whole man, and come to an end with his dissolution. As to the active Nous, he tells us that it cannot think without the assistance of the passive Nous, which is mortal. And there are various passages in the 'Nicomachean Ethics' showing that he had faced this negation of a future life, and was perfectly resigned to its consequences.[2] At one period of his life, probably when under the immediate influence of Plato, he had indulged

[1] *De An.*, III., i., p. 425. a, 13.

[2] See Zeller pp. 602–606, where the whole subject is thoroughly discussed.

in dreams of immortality ; but a profounder acquaintance with natural science sufficed to dissipate them. Perhaps a lingering veneration for his teacher made him purposely use ambiguous language in reference to the eternity of that creative reason which he had so closely associated with self-consciousness. It may remind us of Spinoza's celebrated proposition, *Sentimus experimurque nos aeternos esse*, words absolutely disconnected with the hope of a continued existence of the individual after death, but apparently intended to enlist some of the sentiment associated with that belief on the side of the writer's own philosophy.

On the other hand, the spirit of Plato's religion survived in the teaching of his disciple under a new form. The idea of an eternal personality was, as it were, unified and made objective by being transferred from the human to the divine; and so each philosopher developes an aspect of religious faith which is wanting in the other, thereby illustrating the tendencies, to some extent mutually exclusive, which divide all theology between them. It remains to observe that if even Aristotle's theism is inconsistent with the Catholic faith, much more must his psychology be its direct negation. *The* Philosophy of *the* Philosopher is as fatal to the Church's doctrine of future rewards and punishments as it is to her doctrine of divine interference with the usual order of nature.

VI.

We now pass to the consideration of Aristotle's most important achievement—his system of logic. And as, here also, we shall find much to criticise, it is as well to begin by saying that, in our opinion, his contributions to the science are the most valuable ever made, and perhaps have done more to advance it than all other writings on the same subject put together.

The principal business of reason is, as we have seen, to

form abstract ideas or concepts of things. But before the time of Aristotle it had already been discovered that concepts, or rather the terms expressing them, were capable of being united in propositions which might be either true or false, and whose truth might be a matter either of certainty or of simple opinion. Now, in modern psychology, down to the most recent times, it has always been assumed that, just as there is an intellectual faculty or operation called abstraction corresponding to the terms of which a proposition is composed, so also there is a faculty or operation called judgment corresponding to the entire proposition. Sometimes, again, the third operation, which consists in linking propositions together to form syllogisms, is assigned to a distinct faculty called reason; sometimes all three are regarded as ascending steps in a single fundamental process. Neither Plato nor Aristotle, however, had thought out the subject so scientifically. To both the framing, or rather the discovery, of concepts was by far the most important business of a philosopher, judgment and reasoning being merely subsidiary to it. Hence, while in one part of their logic they were realists and conceptualists, in other parts they were nominalists. Abstract names and the definitions unfolding their connotation corresponded to actual entities in Nature—the eternal Ideas of the one and the substantial forms of the other—as well as to mental representations about whose existence they were agreed, while ascribing to them a different origin. But they did not in like manner treat propositions as the expression of natural laws without, or of judgments within, the mind; while reasoning they regarded much more as an art of thinking, a method for the discovery of ideas, than as the systematisation of a process spontaneously performed by every human being without knowing it; and, even as such, their tendency is to connect it with the theory of definition rather than with the theory of synthetic propositions. Some approach to a realistic view is, indeed, made by both. The

restless and penetrating thought of Plato had, probably towards the close of his career, led him to enquire into the mutual relations of those Ideas which he had at first been inclined to regard as absolutely distinct. He shows us in the *Sophist* how the most abstract notions, such as Being, Identity, and so forth, must, to a certain extent, partake of each other's nature; and when their relationship does not lie on the surface, he seeks to establish it by the interposition of a third idea obviously connected with both. In the later books of the *Republic* he also points to a scheme for arranging his Ideas according to a fixed hierarchy resembling the concatenation of mathematical proofs, by ascending and descending whose successive gradations the mind is to become familiarised with absolute truth; and we shall presently see how Aristotle, following in the same track, sought for a counterpart to his syllogistic method in the objective order of things. Nevertheless, with him, as well as with his master, science was not what it is with us, a study of laws, a perpetually growing body of truth, but a process of definition and classification, a systematisation of what had already been perceived and thought.

It was from the initiative of Socrates that logic received this direction. By insisting on the supreme importance of definition, he drew away attention from the propositions which add to our knowledge, and concentrated it on those which only fix with precision the meaning of words. Yet, in so doing he was influenced quite as much by the spirit of the older physical philosophy, which he denounced, as by the necessities of the new humanistic culture, which he helped to introduce. His definitions were, in truth, the reproduction, on a very minute scale, of those attempts to formulate the whole universe which busied the earliest Ionian speculation. Following the natural tendency of Greek thought, and the powerful attraction of cosmic philosophy, an effort was speedily made to generalise and connect these partial defini-

tions until they grew into a system of universal classification. It was when, under the influence of a new analysis, this system threatened to fall to pieces, that a rudimentary doctrine of judgment first made its appearance. The structure of a grammatical sentence was used to explain how objective ideas could, in a manner, overlap and adhere to one another. Hence propositions, which, as the expression of general truths, were destined to become the beginning and end of thought, remained at first strictly subordinated to the individual concepts that they linked and reconciled.

With Aristotle propositions assumed a new importance. He looked on them as mediating, not only between concepts, but also between conception and reasoning. Still, neither as a psychologist nor as a logician did he appreciate them at their real value. A very brief consideration is given to judgment in his work on the soul, and we are left in doubt whether it is a function of Nous alone or of Nous combined with some other faculty. Setting aside the treatise on Interpretation, which is probably spurious, and, at any rate, throws no new light on the subject, we may gather from his logical writings half a dozen different suggestions towards a classification of propositions, based partly on their form and partly on their import. In all we find an evident tendency to apply, here also, his grand fundamental distinction between the sphere of uniformity and the sphere of change and opposition. All propositions are either universal or particular; either positive or negative; either necessary or actual or contingent; either reciprocating or not reciprocating; either essential or accidental; either answering to the first question in the categories, or to one of the other nine.[1] But nowhere is any attempt made to combine and systematise these various points of view.

In the theory of reasoning the simple proposition is taken as a starting-point; but instead of deducing the syllogism

[1] *Anal. Pr.*, I., i., *sub in.*; ii., *sub in.*; *Top.*, I., viii., Bekker (in the Tauchnitz ed., vi.).

from the synthesis of two premises, Aristotle reaches the premises through the conclusion. He tells us, indeed, that reasoning is a way of discovering from what we know, something that we did not know before. With him, however, it is really a process not of discovery but of proof. He starts with the conclusion, analyses it into predicate and subject or major and minor, and then, by a further analysis, introduces a middle term connecting the two. Thus, we begin with the proposition, 'Caius is mortal,' and prove it by interpolating the notion humanity between its two extremes. From this point of view the premises are merely a temporary scaffolding for bringing the major and minor into connexion with the middle term; and this is also the reason why Aristotle recognises three syllogistic figures only, instead of the four admitted by later logicians. For, the middle may either be contained in one extreme and contain the other, which gives us the first figure; or it may contain both, which gives the second figure; or be contained in both, which gives the third; and this is an exhaustive enumeration of the possible combinations.[1]

We have here, also, the secret of that elaborate machinery devised for the very unnecessary purpose of converting syllogisms of the second and third figure into syllogisms of the first, which is one of the Stagirite's principal contributions to logic. For it is only in the first figure that the notion by which the extremes are either united or held apart is really a middle term, that is to say, really comes between the others. The distinction between perfect and imperfect syllogisms also serves to illustrate Aristotle's systematic division between the necessary and the contingent. The method of proof by inclusion corresponds in its unconditioned and independent validity to the concentric arrangement of the supernal spheres; the second and third figures, with their conversions and reductions, to the sublunary sphere in its helpless dependence on

[1] *Anal. Pr.*, I., xxiii., 41, a, 11 (in the Tauchnitz ed., xxii., 8).

the celestial revolutions, and its transformations of the elements into one another.

The rules which Aristotle gives us for the conversion of propositions are no doubt highly instructive, and throw great light on their meaning; but one cannot help observing that such a process as conversion ought, on his own principles, to have been inadmissible. With Plato, the copulation of subject and predicate corresponded to an almost mechanical juxtaposition of two self-existent ideas. It was, therefore, a matter of indifference in what order they were placed. Aristotle, on the other hand, after insisting on the restoration of the concrete object, and reducing general notions to an analysis of its particular aspects, could not but make the predicate subordinate to, and dependent on, the subject—a relation which altogether excludes the logical possibility of making them interchangeable with one another.[1]

The antithetical structure of the whole system is reproduced even in the first syllogistic figure, where there is a similar opposition between the first mood, by which alone universal affirmatives can be obtained, and the remaining three, whose conclusions are either negative or particular, or both. And the complicated rules for testing the validity of those syllogisms in which the premises are distinguished as necessary, actual, and possible, are still more obviously based on Aristotle's false metaphysical distinctions; so that with the overthrow of those distinctions large portions of the *Analytics* lose their entire value for modern students.

On the other hand, a theory of reasoning based on the relations of concepts, instead of on the relations of judgments, necessarily leaves out of account the whole doctrine of hypothetical and disjunctive propositions, together with that of the syllogisms based on them; since the elements of which they are composed are themselves propositions. And this inevitable omission is the more remarkable because alterna-

[1] This point is well brought out in F. A. Lange's *Logische Untersuchungen.*

tive and, to a less extent, hypothetical arguments form the staple of Aristotle's own dialectic ; while categorical reasoning never occurs in it at all. His constant method is to enumerate all possible views of a subject, and examine them one after the other, rejecting those which are untenable, and resting content with the remainder. In other words, he reaches his positive conclusions through a series of negative premises representing a process of gradual elimination. The *First Analytics* is itself an admirable instance of his favourite method. Every possible combination of terms is discussed, and the valid moods are sifted out from a much greater number of illegitimate syllogisms. The dialectic of Socrates and Plato followed the same procedure. It was essentially experimental—a method of trial, elimination, and selection. On going back still further, we find that when there is any reasoning at all in Homer, it is conducted after the same fashion. Hector, in his soliloquy before the Scaean Gate, imagines three alternative courses, together exhausting the possibilities of the situation. He may either retreat within the walls, or offer terms of peace to Achilles, or fight. The first two alternatives being rejected, nothing remains but the third. This is the most elaborate example ; but on many other occasions Homer's actors are represented as hesitating between two courses, and finally deciding on one of them.

Disjunction is, in truth, the primordial form of all reasoning, out of which the other forms are successively evolved ; and, as such, it is common to man with the lower animals. You are taking a walk in the country with your dog. You come to a stream and jump over it. On measuring the distance with his eye, the animal is afraid to follow you. After waiting a little, he first runs up stream in search of a crossing, and, finding none, returns to look for one in the opposite direction. Failing there also, he comes back once more, and either ventures on the leap or makes his way home by some other route. Now, on considering the matter a little more

closely, we shall find that hypothetical reasoning takes its rise from the examination of each separate alternative presented by a disjunctive premise. A plurality of courses being open to us, we consider what will ensue on the acceptance or rejection of each. The dog in our illustration thinks (after a canine fashion) that if he jumps he may fall in; if he does not, he will be left behind. Hector will not take refuge within the walls, because, if he does, Polydamas will triumph over him; nor will he offer terms of peace, because, if he does, Achilles will refuse them. Once more, categorical reasoning is developed out of hypothetical reasoning by the necessity of deducing consequences from a general rule. Hector must have argued from the known characters of Polydamas and Achilles, that in certain circumstances they would act after a certain manner. We may add, that this progress of conscious reasoning is a reproduction of the unconscious logic according to which life itself is evolved. All sorts of combinations are spontaneously produced, which, in consequence of the struggle for existence, cannot all survive. Those adapted to the conditions of life are selected, on trial, at the expense of the rest; and their adaptation or non-adaptation is determined in accordance with categorical laws. Furthermore, the framing of a disjunctive proposition necessitates the systematic distribution of possibilities under mutually exclusive heads, thus involving the logical processes of definition, division, and classification. Dialectic, as Plato understood it, consisted almost entirely in the joint performance of these operations; —a process which Aristotle regards as the immediate but very imperfect precursor of his own syllogistic method.[1] You cannot, he says, prove anything by dividing, for instance, all living things into the two classes, mortal and immortal; unless, indeed, you assume the very point under discussion—to which class a particular species belongs. Yet this is how he constantly reasons himself; and even demonstrative reason-

[1] *Anal. Pr.*, I., xxxi.; *Anal. Post.*, II., v.

ing, as he interprets it, implies the possession of a ready-made classification. For, according to him, it consists exclusively of propositions which predicate some essential attribute of a thing—in other words, some attribute already included in the definition of the subject; and a continuous series of such definitions can only be given by a fixed classification of things.

VII.

We have endeavoured to show that Aristotle's account of the syllogism is redundant on the one side and defective on the other, both errors being due to a false analysis of the reasoning process itself, combined with a false metaphysical philosophy. The same evil influences tell with much greater effect on his theory of applied reasoning. Here the fundamental division, corresponding to that between heaven and earth in the cosmos, is between demonstration and dialectic or experimental reasoning. The one starts with first principles of unquestionable validity, the other with principles the validity of which is to be tested by their consequences. Stated in its most abstract form, the distinction is sound, and very nearly prefigures the modern division between deduction and induction, the process by which general laws are applied, and the process by which they are established. Aristotle, however, committed two great mistakes; he thought that each method corresponded to an entirely different order of phenomena: and he thought that both were concerned for the most part with definitions. The *Posterior Analytics*, which contains his theory of demonstration, answers to the astronomical portion of his physics; it is the doctrine of eternal and necessary truth. And just as his ontology distinguishes between the Prime Mover himself unmoved and the eternal movement produced by his influence, so also his logic distinguishes between infallible first principles and the truths derived from them, the latter being, in his opinion, of inferior

value. Now, according to Aristotle, these first principles are definitions, and it is to this fact that their self-evident certainty is due. At the same time they are not verbal but real definitions—that is to say, the universal forms of things in themselves as made manifest to the eye of reason, or rather, stamped upon it like the impression of a signet-ring on wax. And, by a further refinement, he seems to distinguish between the concept as a whole and the separate marks which make it up, these last being the ultimate elements of all existence, and as much beyond its complex forms as Nous is beyond reasoned truth.

Such a view was essentially unfavourable to the progress of science, assigning, as it did, a higher dignity to meagre and very questionable abstractions than to the far-reaching combinations by which alone we are enabled to unravel the inmost texture of visible phenomena. Instead of using reason to supplement sense, Aristotle turned it into a more subtle and universal kind of sense; and if this disastrous assimilation was to a certain extent imposed upon him by the traditions of Athenian thought, it harmonised admirably with the descriptive and superficial character of his own intelligence. Much was also due to the method of geometry, which in his time had already assumed the form made familiar to us by Euclid's *Elements*. The employment of axioms side by side with definitions, might, indeed, have drawn his attention to the existence and importance of judgments which, in Kantian terminology, are not analytic but synthetic—that is, which add to the content of a notion instead of simply analysing it. But although he mentions axioms, and states that mathematical theorems are deduced from them, no suspicion of their essential difference from definitions, or of the typical significance which they were destined to assume in the theory of reasoning, seems ever to have crossed his mind; otherwise he could hardly have failed to ask how we come by our knowledge of them, and to what they correspond in Nature. On the whole,

it seems likely that he looked on them as an analysis of our ideas, differing only from definition proper by the generality of its application; for he names the law of contradiction as the most important of all axioms, and that from which the others proceed;[1] next to it he places the law of excluded middle, which is also analytical; and his only other example is, that if equals be taken from equals the remainders are equal, a judgment the synthetic character of which is by no means clear, and has occasionally been disputed.[2]

We cannot, then, agree with those critics who attribute to Aristotle a recognition of such things as 'laws of nature,' in the sense of uniform co-existences and sequences.[3] Such an idea implies a certain balance and equality between subject and predicate which he would never have admitted. It would, in his own language, be making relation, instead of substance, the leading category. It must be remembered also that he did not acknowledge the existence of those constant conjunctions in Nature which we call laws. He did not admit that all matter was heavy, or that fluidity implied the presence of heat. The possession of constant properties, or rather of a single constant property—circular rotation—is reserved for the aether. Nor is this a common property of different and indefinitely multipliable phenomena; it characterises a single body, measurable in extent and unique in kind. Moreover,

[1] *Metaph.*, IV., iii., *sub in.* [2] *Anal. Post.*, I., x.

[3] 'Die Wissenschaft soll die Erscheinungen aus ihren Gründen erklären, welche näher in den allgemeinen Ursachen und Gesetzen zu suchen sind' (Zeller, p. 203). 'Induction is the method of proceeding from particular instances to general laws' (Wallace, p. 13). 'It seems to have been his [Aristotle's] idea that after gathering facts up to a certain point, a flash of intuition would supervene, telling us "This is a law"' (Grant, p. 68). *Apropos* of the discussion whence this last passage is extracted, we may observe that Sir A. Grant is quite mistaken in saying that Aristotle 'omits to provide for verification.' Aristotle is, on the contrary, most anxious to show that his theories agree with all the known facts. See in particular his memorable declaration (*De Gen. An.*, III., x., p. 760, b, 27), that facts are more to be trusted than reasonings.

The emphasis laid by Aristotle on concepts as distinguished from laws is noticed by J. H. v. Kirchmann, in his German translation of the *Metaphysics*, p. 13.

we have something better than indirect evidence on this point; we have the plain statement of Aristotle himself, that all science depends on first principles, about which it is impossible to be mistaken, precisely because they are universal abstractions not presented to the mind by any combination,[1]—a view quite inconsistent with the priority now given to general laws.

Answering to the first principles of demonstration in logic, if not absolutely identical with them, are what Aristotle calls causes in the nature of things. We have seen what an important part the middle term plays in Aristotle's theory of the syllogism. It is the vital principle of demonstration, the connecting link by which the two extreme terms are attached to one another. In the theory of applied logic, whose object is to bring the order of thought into complete parallelism with the order of things, the middle term through which a fact is demonstrated answers to the cause through which it exists. According to our notions, only two terms, antecedent and consequent, are involved in the idea of causation; and causation only becomes a matter for reasoning when we perceive that the sequence is repeated in a uniform manner. But Aristotle was very far from having reached, or even suspected, this point of view. A cause is with him not a determining antecedent, but a secret nexus by which the co-existence of two phenomena is explained. Instead of preceding it intercedes; and this is why he finds its subjective counterpart in the middle term of the syllogism. Some of his own examples will make the matter clearer. Why is the moon eclipsed? Because the earth intervenes between her and the sun. Why is the bright side of the moon always turned towards the sun? Because she shines by his reflected light (here light is the middle term). Why is that person talking to the rich man? Because he wants to borrow money of him. Why are those two men friends? Because they have the same enemy.[2]

[1] *De An.*, III., vi., *sub in.*, taken together with *Anal. Post.*, I., vi.

[2] *Anal. Post.*, I., xxxiv.; II., ii.

Aristotle even goes so far as to eliminate the notion of sequence from causation altogether. He tells us that the causes of events are contemporary with the events themselves; those of past events being past; of present events, present; and of future events, future. 'This thing will not be because that other thing has happened, for the middle term must be homogeneous with the extremes.'[1] It is obvious that such a limitation abolishes the power of scientific prediction, which, if not the only test of knowledge, is at any rate its most valuable verification. The Stagirite has been charged with trusting too much to deductive reasoning; it now appears that, on the contrary, he had no conception of its most important function. Here, as everywhere, he follows not the synthetic method of the mathematician, but the analytic method of the naturalist. Finally, instead of combining the notions of cause and kind, he systematically confuses them. It will be remembered how his excellent division of causes into material, formal, efficient, and final, was rendered nugatory by the continued influence of Plato's ideas. The formal cause always tended to absorb the other three; and it is by their complete assimilation that he attempts to harmonise the order of demonstration with the order of existence. For the formal cause of a phenomenon simply meant those properties which it shared with others of the same kind, and it was by virtue of those properties that it became a subject for general reasoning, which was interpreted as a methodical arrangement of concepts one within another, answering to the concentric disposition of the cosmic spheres.

Owing to the slight importance which Aristotle attaches to judgments as compared with concepts, he does not go very deeply into the question, how do we obtain our premises? He says, in remarkably emphatic language, that all knowledge is acquired either by demonstration or by induction; or rather, we may add, in the last resort by the latter only, since demon-

[1] *Anal. Post.*, II., xii., p. 95, a, 36.

stration rests on generals which are discovered inductively but his generals mean definitions and abstract predicates o subjects, rather than synthetic propositions. If, however, hi attention had been called to the distinction, we cannot suppos that he would, on his own principles, have adopted conclusion essentially different from those of the modern experientia school. Mr. Wallace does, indeed, claim him as a supporte of the theory that no inference can be made from particular to particulars without the aid of a general proposition, and a having refuted, by anticipation, Mill's assertion to the contrary We quote the analysis which is supposed to prove this in Mr Wallace's own words :—

We reason that because the war between Thebes and Phocis wa a war between neighbours and an evil, therefore the war betwee Athens and Thebes, being also a war between neighbours, will i all probability be also an evil. Thus, out of the one parallel case— the war between Thebes and Phocis—we form the *general* proposi tion, All wars between neighbours are evils; to this we add th minor, the war between Athens and Thebes is a war between neigh bours—and thence arrive at the conclusion that the war betwee Athens and Thebes will be likewise an evil.[1]

On the strength of this Mr. Wallace elsewhere observes :—

His [Aristotle's] theory of syllogism is simply an explicit state ment of the fact that all knowledge, all thought, rests on universa truths or general propositions—that all knowledge, whether 'deduc tive' or 'inductive,' is arrived at by the aid, the indispensable aid of general propositions. We in England have been almost charme into the belief that reasoning is perpetually from particular to par ticular, and a 'village matron' and her 'Lucy' have been used t express the truth for us in the concrete form adapted to our weake comprehension (Mill's *Logic*, bk. ii. ch. 3). We shall next be told forsooth, that oxygen and hydrogen do not enter into the composi tion of water, because our village matron 'perpetually' drinks i without 'passing through' either element, and the analysis of th chemist will be proved as great a fiction as the analysis of the logician Aristotle has supplied the links which at once upset all such superficia

[1] Wallace's *Outlines*, p. 14.

analysis. He has shown that even in analogy or example, which *apparently* proceeds in this way from one particular instance to another particular instance, we are only justified in so proceeding in so far as we have transformed the particular instance into a general proposition.[1]

Now, there is this great difference between Aristotle and Mill, that the former is only showing how reasoning from examples can be set forth in syllogistic form, while the latter is investigating the psychological process which underlies all reasoning, and the real foundation on which a valid inference rests—questions which had never presented themselves clearly to the mind of the Greek philosopher at all. Mill argues, in the first instance, that when any particular proposition is deduced from a general proposition, it is proved by the same evidence as that on which the general itself rests, namely, on other particulars; and, so far, he is in perfect agreement with Aristotle. He then argues that inferences from particulars to particulars are perpetually made without passing through a general proposition: and, to illustrate his meaning, he quotes the example of a 'village matron and her Lucy,' to which Mr. Wallace refers with a very gratuitous sneer.[2]

However, as we have seen, he is not above turning it against Mill. The drift of his own illustration is not very clear, but we suppose it implies that the matron unconsciously frames the general proposition: My remedy is good for all children suffering from the same disease as Lucy; and with equal unconsciousness reasons down from this to the case of her neighbour's child. Now, it is quite unjustifiable to call Mill's analysis superficial because it leaves out of account a hypothesis incompatible with the nominalism which Mill professed. It is still more unjustifiable to quote against it

[1] *Ibid.*, Preface, pp. viii.–ix.

[2] As if Mill wrote exclusively for Oxford tutors, and as if other philosophers had not constantly elucidated their arguments by concrete examples. One does not see why the village matron should be more deserving of contempt than Aristotle's Thebans and Phocians.

the authority of a philosopher who perfectly agreed with those who disbelieve in the possibility of unconscious knowledge,[1] and contemptuously rejected Plato's opinion to the contrary. Nor is this all. The doctrine that reasoning is from particulars to particulars, even when it passes through general propositions, may be rigorously deduced from Aristotle's own admissions. If nothing exists but particulars, and if knowledge is of what exists, then all knowledge is of particulars. Therefore, if the propositions entering into a chain of reasoning are knowledge, they must deal with particulars exclusively. And, quite apart from the later developments of Aristotle's philosophy, we have his express assertion, that all generals are derived from particulars, which is absolutely incompatible with the alleged fact, that 'all knowledge, all thought, rests on universal truths, on general propositions; that all knowledge, whether "deductive" or "inductive," is arrived at by the aid, the indispensable aid, of general propositions.' To Aristotle the basis of knowledge was not 'truths' of any kind, but concepts; and in the last chapter of the *Posterior Analytics* he has explained how these concepts are derived from sense-perceptions without the aid of any 'propositions' whatever.

We are here confronted with an important and much disputed question, Was Aristotle an empiricist? We hold most decidedly that he was, if by empiricist is meant, what alone should be meant—one who believes that the mind neither anticipates anything in the content, nor contributes anything to the form of experience; in other words, who believes knowledge to be the agreement of thought with things imposed by things on thought. We have already shown, when discussing Sir A. Grant's view to the contrary, that Aristotle was in no sense a transcendental idealist. The other half of our position is proved by the chapter in the *Posterior Analytics* already referred to, the language of which is *primâ facie* so much in favour of our view that the burden of proof

[1] That is, knowledge which has never been actualised.

rests on those who give it another interpretation. Among these, the latest with whom we are acquainted is Zeller. The eminent German historian, after asserting in former editions of his work that Aristotle derived his first principles from the self-contemplation of the Nous, has now, probably in deference to the unanswerable arguments of Kampe, abandoned this position. He still, however, assumes the existence of a rather indefinable *à priori* element in the Aristotelian noology, on the strength of the following considerations:—In the first place, according to Aristotle, even sense-perception is not a purely passive process, and therefore intellectual cognition can still less be so (p. 190). But the passages quoted only amount to this, that the passivity of a thing which is raised from possibility to actuality differs from the passivity implied in the destruction of its proper nature; and that the objects of abstract thought come from within, not from without, in the sense that they are presented by the imagination to the reason. The pure empiricist need not deny either position. He would freely admit that to lose one's reason through drunkenness or disease is a quite different sort of operation from being impressed with a new truth; and he would also admit that we generalise not directly from outward experience, but from that highly-abridged and representative experience which memory supplies. Neither process, however, constitutes an anticipation of outward experience or an addition to it. It is from the materialist, not from the empiricist, that Aristotle differs. He believes that the forms under which matter appears are separable from every particular portion of matter, though not from all matter, in the external world; and he believes that a complete separation between them is effected in the single instance of self-conscious reason, which again, in cognising any particular thing is identified with that thing *minus* its matter. Zeller's next argument is that the cognition of ideas by the Nous is immediate, whereas the process of generalisation from experience described by Aristotle

is extremely indirect. Here Zeller seems to misunderstand the word ἄμεσος. Aristotle never applies it to knowledge, but only to the objective relations of ideas with one another. Two terms constitute an 'immediate' premise when they are not connected by another term, quite irrespective of the steps by which we come to recognise their conjunction. So with the terms themselves. They are 'immediate' when they cannot be derived from any ulterior principle; when, in short, they are simple and uncaused. Finally, the objection that first principles, being the most certain and necessary of any, cannot be derived from sensible experience, which, dealing only with material objects, must inherit the uncertainty and contingency of matter,—is an objection, not to the empiricist interpretation of Aristotle's philosophy, but to empiricism itself; and it is not allowable to explain away the plain words of an ancient writer in order to reconcile them with assumptions which he nowhere admits. That universality and necessity involve an *à priori* cognition or an intellectual intuition, is a modern theory unsupported by a single sentence in Aristotle.[1] We quite agree with Zeller when he goes on to say that in Aristotle's psychology 'certain thoughts and notions arise through the action of the object thought about on the thinking mind, just as perception arises through the action of the perceived object on the percipient' (p. 195); but how this differs from the purest empiricism is more than we are able to understand.

It is remarkable that Aristotle, after repeatedly speaking of induction as an ascent from particulars to generals, when he comes to trace the process by which we arrive at the most general notions of any, does not admit the possibility of such a movement in one direction only. The universal and the individual are, according to him, combined in our most elementary sense-impressions, and the business of scientific

[1] It is a mistake to translate νόησις, as the Germans do, by Anschauung. The Nous does not intuite ideas, but is converted into and consists of them.

experience is to separate them. Starting from a middle point, we work up to indivisible predicates on the one hand and down to indivisible subjects on the other, the final apprehension of both extremes being the office, not of science, but of Nous. This theory is equally true and acute. The perception of individual facts is just as difficult and just as slowly acquired as the conception of ultimate abstractions. Moreover, the two processes are carried on *pari passu*, each being only made possible by and through the other. No true notion can be framed without a firm grasp of the particulars from which it is abstracted; no individual object can be studied without analysing it into a group of common predicates, the idiosyncrasy of which—that is, their special combination—differentiates it from every other object. What, however, we wish to remark is the illustration incidentally afforded by this striking aperçu of Aristotle's analytical method, which is also the essentially Greek method of thought. We saw that, for our philosopher, syllogism was not the subsumption of a particular case under a general law, but the interpolation of a mean between two extremes; we now see that his induction is not the finding of a law for the particular phenomenon, but its analysis into two elements—one universal and the other individual—a solution of the mean into the extremes. And the distinctive originality of his whole system was to fix two such extremes for the universe—a self-thinking thought in absolute self-identity at one end of the scale, and an absolutely indeterminate matter at the other; by combining which in various proportions he then re-constructed the whole intermediate phenomenal reality. In studying each particular class of facts, he follows the same method. The genus is marked by some characteristic attribute which one species—the prerogative species, so to speak—exhibits in its greatest purity, while the others form a graduated scale by variously combining this attribute with its opposite or privation. Hence his theory, since revived by Goethe, that

the colours are so many different mixtures of light and darkness.

It has, until lately, been customary to speak as if all that Aristotle knew about induction was contained in a few scattered passages where it is mentioned under that name in the *Analytics*. This, no doubt, is true, if by induction we mean simple generalisation. But if we understand by it the philosophy of experimental evidence—the analysis of those means by which, in the absence of direct observation, we decide between two conflicting hypotheses—then the *Topics* must be pronounced as good a discussion on the subject as was compatible with his general theory of knowledge. For he supposes that there are large classes of phenomena, including, among other things, the whole range of human life, which, not being bound by any fixed order, lie outside the scope of scientific demonstration, although capable of being determined with various degrees of probability; and here also what he has in view is not the discovery of laws, but the construction of definitions. These being a matter of opinion, could always be attacked as well as maintained. Thus the constant conflict and balancing of opposite forces, which we have learned to associate with the sublunary sphere, has its logical representative no less than the kindred ideas of uncertainty and vicissitude. And, in connexion with this side of applied logic, Aristotle has also to consider the requirements of those who took part in the public debates on disputed questions, then very common among educated Athenians, and frequently turning on verbal definitions. Hence, while we find many varieties of reasoning suggested, such as Reasoning by Analogy, Disjunctive Reasoning, Hypothetical Reasoning (though without a generalised expression for all its varieties), and, what is most remarkable, three out of Mill's four Experimental Methods,[1] we do not find that any interesting or

[1] For Analogy, see *Top.*, II., x., *sub in.*; Disjunction, II., vi., *sub in.*; Hypothetical Reasoning, II., x., p. 115, a 15; Method of Differences, II.,

useful application is made of them. Even considered as a handbook for debaters, the *Topics* is not successful. With the practical incompetence of a mere naturalist, Aristotle has supplied heads for arguments in such profusion and such utter carelessness of their relative importance that no memory could sustain the burden, except in the probably rare instances when a lifetime was devoted to their study.

VIII.

We have now concluded our survey of the first great mental antithesis, that between reason on the one hand, and sense and opinion on the other. The next antithesis, that between reason and passion, will occupy us a much shorter time. With it we pass from theory to practice, from metaphysics and logic to moral philosophy. But, as we saw in the preceding chapter, Aristotle is not a practical genius; for him the supreme interest of life is still the acquisition of knowledge. Theorising activity corresponds to the celestial world, in which there can be neither opposition nor excess; while passion corresponds to the sublunary sphere, where order is only preserved by the balancing of antithetical forces; and the moderating influence of reason, to the control exercised by the higher over the lower system.

The passions themselves, and the means by which they can be either excited or controlled, are described in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* with wonderful knowledge of human nature in the abstract, but with almost no reference to the art for whose purposes the information is ostensibly systematised; while in the *Ethics* they are studied, so to speak, statically, in their condition of permanent equilibration or disequilibration; the virtues and vices being represented as so many different

xi., *sub in.*; Method of Residues, VI., xi., *sub in.*; Concomitant Variations, II., x., p. 114, b, 37; V., viii., *sub in.*; VI., vii., *sub in.* The Method of Agreement occurs *An. Prior.*, II., xxvii., *sub fin.*; and *An. Post.*, II., xiii., p. 97, b, 7.

aspects of those conditions. It is obvious that such an extremely artificial parallelism could not be carried out without a considerable strain and distortion of the facts involved. The only virtue that can, with truth, be described as a form of moderation is temperance; and even in temperance this is accidental rather than essential. Elsewhere Aristotle deduces the extremes from the mean rather than the mean from the extremes; and sometimes one of the extremes is invented for the occasion. To fit justice, confessedly the most important virtue, into such a scheme, was obviously impracticable without reinterpreting the idea of moderation. Instead of an equilibrium between opposing impulses in the same person, we have equality in the treatment of different persons; which again resolves itself into giving them their own, without any definite determination of what their own may be.[1] It cannot even be said that Aristotle represented either the best ethical thought of his own age, or an indispensable stage in the evolution of all thought. The extreme insufficiency of his ethical theory is due to the fancied necessity of squaring it with the requirements of his cosmological system. For no sooner does he place himself at the popular point of view than he deduces the particular virtues from regard to the welfare of others, and treats them all as so many different forms of justice.[2]

Aristotle has sometimes been represented as an advocate of free-will against necessity. But the question had not really been opened in his time. He rejected fatalism; but it had not occurred to him that internal motives might exercise a constraining power over action. Nor has his freedom anything to do with the self-assertion of mind, its extrication from the chain of physical antecedents. It is simply the element of

[1] It may possibly be urged that the fifth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is of doubtful authenticity. Still the dilemma remains that Aristotle either omitted the most important of all moral questions from his ethics, or that he treated it in a miserably inadequate manner.

[2] *Eth. Nic.*, V., iii.; *Rhet.*, I., vi., p. 1362, b, 28; ix., p. 1366, b, 4.

arbitrariness and uncertainty supposed to characterise the region of change and opposition, as distinguished from the higher region of undeviating regularity.

It is only in this higher region that perfect virtue can be realised. The maintenance of a settled balance between rival solicitations, or between the excess and defect of those impulses which lead us to seek pleasure and avoid pain, is good indeed, but neither the only nor the chief good. The law of moderation does not extend to that supremely happy life which is related to our emotional existence as the aether to the terrestrial elements, as soul to body, as reason to sense, as science to opinion. Here it is the steady subordination of means to ends which imitates the insphering of the heavenly orbs, the hierarchy of psychic faculties, and the chain of syllogistic arguments. Of theoretic activity we cannot have too much, and all other activities, whether public or private, should be regarded as so much machinery for ensuring its peaceful prosecution. Wisdom and temperance had been absolutely identified by Socrates; they are as absolutely held apart by Aristotle. And what we have had occasion to observe in the other departments of thought is verified here once more. The method of analysis and opposition, apparently so prudent, proved, in the end, unfruitful. Notwithstanding his paradoxes, Socrates was substantially right. The moral regeneration of the world was destined to be brought about, not by Dorian discipline, but by free Athenian thought, working on practical conceptions—by the discovery of new moral truth, or rather by the dialectic development of old truth. And, conversely, the highest development of theoretic activity was not attained by isolating it in egoistic self-contemplation from the world of human needs, but by consecrating it to their service, informing it with their vitality, and subjecting it, in common with them, to that law of moderation from which no energy, however godlike, is exempt.

The final antithesis of conscious life is that between the

individual and the state. In this sense, Aristotle's *Politics* is the completion of his *Ethics*. It is only in a well-ordered community that moral habits can be acquired; and it is only in such a community that the best or intellectual life can be attained, although, properly speaking, it is not a social life. Nevertheless, the *Politics*, like every other portion of Aristotle's system, reproduces within itself the elements of an independent whole. To understand its internal organisation, we must begin by disregarding Aristotle's abortive classification (chiefly adapted from Plato) of constitutions into three legitimate—Monarchy, Aristocracy, and Republic; and three illegitimate—Democracy, Oligarchy, and Tyranny. Aristotle distinguishes them by saying that the legitimate forms are governed with a view to the general good; the illegitimate with a view to the interests of particular classes or persons. But, in point of fact, as Zeller shows,[1] he cannot keep up this distinction; and we shall better understand his true idea by substituting for it another—that between the intellectual and the material state. The object of the one is to secure the highest culture for a ruling caste, who are to abstain from industrial occupations, and to be supported by the labour of a dependent population. Such a government may be either monarchical or aristocratic; but it must necessarily be in the hands of a few. The object of the other is to maintain a stable equilibrium between the opposing interests of rich and poor—two classes practically distinguished as the few and the many. This end is best attained where supreme power belongs to the middle class. The deviations are represented by oligarchy and tyranny on the one side, and by extreme democracy on the other. Where such constitutions exist, the best mode of preserving them is to moderate their characteristic excess by borrowing certain institutions from the opposite form of government, or by modifying their own institutions in a conciliatory sense.

[1] P. 753.

In the last chapter we dealt at length with the theories of art, and especially of tragic poetry, propounded in Aristotle's *Poetics*. For the sake of formal completeness, it may be mentioned here that those theories are adapted to the general scheme of his systematic philosophy. The plot or plan of a work answers to the formal or rational element in Nature, and this is why Aristotle so immensely over-estimates its importance. And, just as in his moral philosophy, the ethical element, represented by character-drawing, is strictly subordinated to it. The centre of equilibrium is, however, not supplied by virtue, but by exact imitation of Nature, so that the characters must not deviate very far from mediocrity in the direction either of heroism or of wickedness.

IX.

Notwithstanding the radical error of Aristotle's philosophy —the false abstraction and isolation of the intellectual from the material sphere in Nature and in human life—it may furnish a useful corrective to the much falser philosophy insinuated, if not inculcated, by some moralists of our own age and country. Taken altogether, the teaching of these writers seems to be that the industry which addresses itself to the satisfaction of our material wants is much more meritorious than the artistic work which gives us direct aesthetic enjoyment, or the literary work which stimulates and gratifies our intellectual cravings ; while within the artistic sphere fidelity of portraiture is preferred to the creation of ideal beauty ; and within the intellectual sphere, mere observation of facts is set above the theorising power by which facts are unified and explained. Some of the school to whom we allude are great enemies of materialism ; but teaching like theirs is materialism of the worst description. Consistently carried

out, it would first reduce Europe to the level of China, and then reduce the whole human race to the level of bees or beavers. They forget that when we were all comfortably clothed, housed, and fed, our true lives would have only just begun. The choice would then remain between some new refinement of animal appetite and the theorising activity which, according to Aristotle, is the absolute end, every other activity being only a means for its attainment. There is not, indeed, such a fundamental distinction as he supposed, for activities of every order are connected by a continual reciprocity of services; but this only amounts to saying that the highest knowledge is a means to every other end no less than an end in itself. Aristotle is also fully justified in urging the necessity of leisure as a condition of intellectual progress. We may add that it is a leisure which is amply earned, for without it industrial production could not be maintained at its present height. Nor should the same standard of perfection be imposed on spiritual as on material labour. The latter could not be carried on at all unless success, and not failure, were the rule. It is otherwise in the ideal sphere. There the proportions are necessarily reversed. We must be content if out of a thousand guesses and trials one should contribute something to the immortal heritage of truth. Yet we may hope that this will not always be so, that the great discoveries and creations wrought out through the waste of innumerable lives are not only the expiation of all error and suffering in the past, but are also the pledge of a future when such sacrifices shall no longer be required.

The two elements of error and achievement are so intimately blended and mutually conditioned in the philosophy which we have been reviewing, that to decide on their respective importance is impossible without first deciding on a still larger question — the value of systematic thought as such, and apart from its actual content. For Aristotle was perhaps the greatest master of systematisation that ever lived. The

framework and language of science are still, to a great extent, what he made them; and it remains to be seen whether they will ever be completely remodelled. Yet even this gift has not been an unmixed benefit, for it was long used in the service of false doctrines, and it still induces critics to read into the Aristotelian forms truths which they do not really contain. Let us conclude by observing that of all the ancients, or even of all thinkers before the eighteenth century, there is none to whom the methods and results of modern science could so easily be explained. While finding that they reversed his own most cherished convictions on every point, he would still be prepared by his logical studies to appreciate the evidence on which they rest, and by his ardent love of truth to accept them without reserve. Most of all would he welcome our astronomy and our biology with wonder and delight, while viewing the development of modern machinery with much more qualified admiration, and the progress of democracy perhaps with suspicious fear. He who thought that the mind and body of an artisan were alike debased by the exercise of some simple handicraft under the pure bright sky of Greece, what would he have said to the effect wrought on human beings by the noisome, grinding, sunless, soulless drudgery of our factories and mines! How profoundly unfitted would he have deemed its victims to influence those political issues with which the interests of science are every day becoming more vitally connected! Yet slowly, perhaps, and unwillingly, he might be brought to perceive that our industry has been the indispensable basis of our knowledge, as supplying both the material means and the moral ends of its cultivation. He might also learn that there is an even closer relationship between the two: that while the supporters of privilege are leagued for the maintenance of superstition, the workers, and those who advocate their claims to political equality, are leagued for its restraint and overthrow. And if

he still shrank back from the heat and smoke and turmoil amid which the genius of our age stands, like another Heracleitus, in feverish excitement, by the steam-furnace whence its powers of revolutionary transmutation are derived, we too might reapply the words of the old Ephesian prophet, bidding him enter boldly, for here also there are gods.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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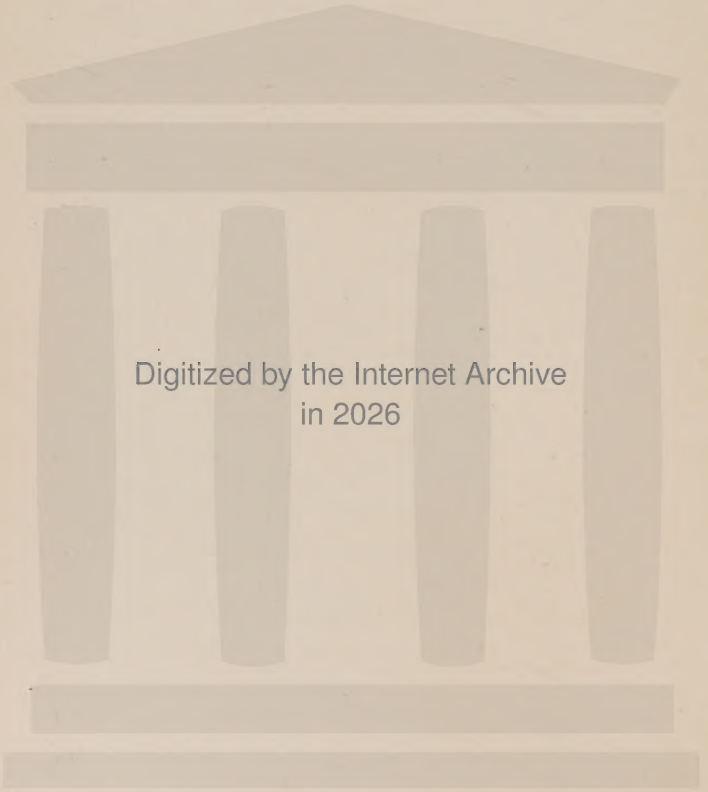

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THE
HISTORY OF ENGLISH RATIONALISM
IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

THE HISTORY

OF

ENGLISH RATIONALISM

IN THE

NINETEENTH CENTURY

BY

ALFRED WILLIAM BENN

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

WITHDRAWN FROM THE LIBRARIES
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'When the Eleates asked Xenophanes whether they should sacrifice to Leucothea, and mourn for her, or not, he advised them not to sacrifice to her if she was human, and not to mourn for her if she was divine.'—ARISTOTLE.

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TO MY WIFE

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PREFACE

In a letter addressed to Archbishop Benson on his acceptance of the Primacy, more than twenty-three years ago, Dr. Fenton Hort mentions as the most formidable perils then in prospect for the English Church, 'the danger of its calm and unobtrusive alienation in thought and spirit from the great silent multitude of Englishmen, and again of alienation from fact and love of fact;—mutual alienations both.'

In my opinion this 'alienation from fact and love of fact' is an evil already afflicting not only the English Church, but all the religious communities in England; and in writing the history of modern English Rationalism I have tried to trace the process by which it has been brought about. For the alienation, as Hort observes, is mutual; and to set fact at odds with faith is to rationalise.

Owing to the singular intellectual decline of England, as distinguished from Scotland and Ireland, during the period immediately preceding the French Revolution, criticism of religious beliefs by English writers in the nineteenth century seems to begin almost *de novo*, like the contemporary revival of literature and science, under the influence of extraneous excitements. Thus the period treated of in this work is marked off from previous periods not merely by our artificial system of chronology, but by what may be called a true scientific frontier in time.

Nevertheless, the roots of modern English rationalism, as of all other historical products, stretch far back into the past; and in order to make it intelligible, I have been obliged

to preface my account of its phases with a few introductory chapters, summarising the results reached by criticism up to the beginning of the last century, with some reference to the sort of apologetics by which they were met. It seemed the more necessary to furnish this information as there is no work known to me in which it can be found. Various contributions to the history of religious opinion, both English and foreign, have proved most helpful, and my obligations have, I trust, been sufficiently acknowledged in the notes; but no one work gave all the facts needed for my purpose; nor did any work I consulted put what seemed to me the right interpretation on the facts it supplied.

From the point of view here adopted, religious belief is identified with theological dogma. In the present state of thought, rationalism means the hostile criticism of such belief; and I have not affected to conceal the direction in which my personal sympathies lie. They are frankly given to the rationalistic side. It is hardly to be expected that any one who is interested in the subject to the extent of writing a good-sized book about it should not have made up his mind as to the rights and wrongs of the controversy; nor can I see what useful purpose would have been served by trying to keep my preferences a secret. Even the most rigidly impartial of political historians does not attempt to create an impression that every battle was drawn, or that every division resulted in a tie. In the history of opinion success is, after all, determined to some extent by force of argument; and that would be a strange interpretation of duty which forbade me to state at their full strength the arguments on what I consider to be the winning side, or to point out the weakness of the arguments they have overcome. Belief is, of course, determined by other causes besides good reasoning; and I have tried in each instance to show what these were, and for how much they counted in the final result. But my business being primarily with rationalism as an application of reason to

religious belief, I had to test the value of belief by its agreement with the ordinary laws of logic rather than by its agreement with prejudice or passion, just as the historian of astronomy or of chemistry would have to do in discussing the claims of astrology or of alchemy on our respect. After all, the only question of real importance must be whether the facts have been correctly reported, with the proviso that in this instance the leading facts are beliefs and the psychological motives by which beliefs have been determined.

At the same time, although myself a rationalist, I wish to guard against the notion that this work is intended as a contribution to the controversial literature of rationalism. It would neither surprise nor annoy me to hear that the religious convictions of no single reader had been changed by its perusal. But I own that it would be disappointing to hear that I had thrown no fresh light on the evolution of opinion as such. And if I am not liable to that charge, if I have made the courses of thought a little more intelligible, then my book ought to interest serious students of history, whatever their opinions may happen to be. However dogmatic their beliefs, I trust that they will not be deterred from reading it merely because they find the opposite view stated with unequivocal decision in its pages.

It will be seen that much space has been given to the exposition of various philosophical systems in their relation to religious belief. But considerable as is the place made, I fear that the exposition of these philosophies has been to some extent hampered by the necessarily narrow limits within which it has had to be confined; and some readers may rather resent the apparent assumption that religious belief depends in any way on the intelligence of speculations which cannot be made clear in a few sentences. Such impatience is natural, and would be justifiable if rationalism were responsible for the complications and difficulties introduced by the appeal to some 'higher reason' against conclusions resting on the logic

of common life, of the law-courts, and of positive science. But in fact this appeal to transcendental considerations is often the last refuge of an authoritative tradition dodging behind the idols of the theatre, when the idols of the market-place and of the cave have been overthrown. Or else it is the refuge of certain cowardly equivocators, who, having for their own part rejected the popular faith, try to keep on good terms with its confessors by accepting its creeds in what they call an esoteric sense, that is to say, in a sense diametrically opposed to the original meaning of their words. And I am bound to add that some of the very greatest philosophers, being by their mental constitution the most comprehensive and conciliatory of mankind, the readiest to see good in evil or truth in error, the born mediators between old and new points of view, are thoroughly sincere in their reconstructive efforts, thoroughly unconscious that their systems have the value and function of wooden pontoons rather than the value and function of iron bridges. Accordingly my object has been to give such an analysis of the systems in question as should suffice to show their merely provisional office, their fatal incoherence under the strain of opposite forces ever tending to pull them to pieces. At the same time, those who find the sections of such ideal engineering too difficult or too tedious to follow, may safely pass over as much of the book as is concerned with pure philosophy, reserving their attention for the more concrete or more personal interests dealt with elsewhere.

I have not attempted to furnish anything like a complete bibliography of modern English rationalistic literature. Only such works are mentioned as may be supposed to have exercised a real influence on religious belief in the negative sense. And during the last twenty years of the century these have multiplied to such an extent that only on very stringent principles of selection could the documentary material be brought within manageable dimensions. Still less can the reader look for a full account of the forces opposed to rationalism, whether under the

form of religious movements or of apologetic literature. To some extent these have been concerned as factors in the evolution of rationalism itself; and whenever this seemed to be the case, I have tried to describe them—from the outside—in sufficient detail. It had been my original purpose to say something from this point of view about the most celebrated recent work written in defence of religious faith against reason, Mr. Arthur Balfour's 'Foundations of Belief.' But I cannot find that Mr. Balfour's book, with all its literary brilliancy and controversial ability, has exercised any perceptible influence on contemporary opinion. Nor indeed is its failure very surprising. For any sort of belief, or of no-belief, might with equal plausibility be built upon such foundations as the late Prime Minister has laid. In principle his method amounts to assuming that, nothing being certain, what agrees with our wishes ought to receive our assent. In practice it means so disposing the lights and colours on the system of belief most endeared to us by early associations as to make it seem the most agreeable of all. Such a method may be good enough for theology, because there it can be applied to the further use of passing off defeats as victories. But if the same method were applied to commercial enterprise, it would soon lead to bankruptcy; applied to party-government, it would break up the strongest political organisation in a few years; applied to international politics, it would sooner or later bring about the industrial or military ruin of any country blind enough to entrust the philosophic doubter with the conduct of its affairs.

As to other omissions and deficiencies, they will, I hope, be criticised with due regard to the circumstance that the present enquiry relates to a subject which has never been treated before as a whole, and the materials for which have been systematically ignored by nearly every historian of modern English life and thought.

15*th February*, 1906.

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For Collins's criticism on Daniel (p. 124), see his 'Scheme of Literal Prophecy,' pp. 148 *sqq.* and 440 *sqq.*

For Bishop Watson's etymology of Jordan (p. 218), see Letter III. of his 'Apology for the Bible,' *sub in.*

For Quesnay's theory of thoroughgoing political absolutism, p. 288, see his 'Despotisme de la Chine,' reprinted in Auguste Oncken's edition of his works ('Oeuvres de Quesnay,' Paris, 1888, pp. 563 *sqq.*).

Keble's Assize Sermon, of which an account is given on pp. 350-351, will be found in his 'Sermons, Academical and Occasional' (Oxford, 1847), pp. 127 *sqq.*

In the section on Sir Charles Lyell I have implied (p. 375) that he suffered no personal annoyance on account of the views expressed in his 'Principles of Geology'; and I do not think there is any mention of an attempt at persecution either in his 'Life and Letters,' or in the article on him in the 'Dictionary of National Biography.' It seems, however, according to Prof. Huxley (Collected Essays, IV., p. 216), that Lyell, in the course of a public address, delivered in 1874, 'spoke, with his wonted clearness and vigour, of the social ostracism which pursued him after the publication of the "Principles of Geology," in 1830, on account of the obvious tendency of that noble work to discredit the Pentateuchal accounts of the Creation and the Deluge.'

It is just possible that Lyell may have been merely referring to the exclusion of ladies from his lectures, mentioned on p. 369.

THE HISTORY
OF
ENGLISH RATIONALISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

CHAPTER I

RATIONALISM AND THE METHODS OF FAITH

If the meaning of words were invariably determined by their etymologies, rationalism might be defined as the method and doctrine of those who strive to make reason the supreme regulator of their beliefs nd of their actions; who try to think and speak in terms to which fixed and intelligible senses are attached; who neither assert anything that to their knowledge is inconsistent with admitted truth, nor shrink from accepting the logical consequences of such truth, however remote or unwelcome they may be; and who similarly desire never to act without a conscious purpose, or with conflicting purposes, or with means that conflict with their foreseen ends.

Rationalism so understood would surely merit universal and unqualified approval. To praise it would be to praise reason itself. The rationalist would then be one who cultivated in a pre-eminent degree the faculty by which men are chiefly distinguished from brutes, and the higher from the lower races of mankind, a faculty the denial of which to any human being is associated with contempt when it is partial and with pity when it is complete. And to write the history of rationalism in any country would be to write the history of the best thing in its civilisation, the surest promise of its happiness in the future.

We know, however, that common usage would not tolerate such an interpretation for a single moment. Rationalism and

rationality are felt to be widely different even by those who would be least able to set out the distinction in clear terms. The opponents of what is called rationalism would be sorry to admit that its adherents had a monopoly of reason; nor, when they are truly reasonable, is such a monopoly claimed by the rationalists themselves. What divides the two parties is in fact not so much a question of principle as a question of interpretation. What is meant by reason, what are the limits of its applicability, how does it apply to the matter under discussion —these are the points most frequently raised in the controversies with which we shall have to deal.

At the very outset common usage requires that a very sweeping restriction should be made. Our first definition embraced practice as well as theory. It exhibited complete rationality, that is conscious and avowed self-consistency, as the ideal of conduct no less than of belief. But those whose highest aim in life is to behave reasonably have never been called rationalists. They neither form a party nor do they incur the hostility of any party, though as individuals they may not be very popular with the passionate, the impulsive, or the sentimental sections of society. As a class they are best known under the name of philosophers, more appropriately perhaps than certain scientific specialists on whom the same title is vulgarly but inaccurately bestowed.

The rationalist, on the other hand, is a pure theorist. His theories may or may not influence his practice; but in either case their significance remains the same. Nor does the restriction stop here. The ideal of speculative rationality already set out is now so thoroughly recognised among the educated classes of the civilised world as binding on nearly all our beliefs that in most instances there is no need to distinguish its votaries from the rest of the community. In physical and moral science, in history, in legal investigations, in legislative debates, in the anticipations of business men, in the rough forecasts of private life, reason has only to contend against the dead weight of ignorance, stupidity, and slothfulness: it is not met by a direct denial of its claims.

There remains, however, one most important class of beliefs in reference to which we do encounter such a systematic denial, or an admission made so grudgingly and qualified so carefully

as to be practically equivalent to a denial. These are religious beliefs, especially as presented under the organised form of theological creeds; and it is by the thorough-going application of reason to these creeds with a view to their partial or complete verification that rationalism begins. A rationalist assimilates religious beliefs to every other kind of belief, and demands that they should be judged by the same rules of criticism. He does not in the least object to dogmatic teaching as such, preferring even that all propositions should be presented in clear-cut, categorical forms; but he requires that the dogmas should be stated in intelligible terms, with meanings consistently adhered to; that they should be true in the sense of corresponding to objective realities, existing outside ourselves; and that they should either be self-evident or logically deducible from self-evident premisses. And if the religion is historical, that is to say if its credentials take the form of events alleged to have occurred at certain epochs in past time, or of writings professing to contain authoritative communications from the object of religious belief, he similarly requires that these narratives and documents should be subjected to the same tests as those applied to what theologians call profane history and literature in respect to their credibility and authority. And he further requires that, admitting their authenticity, the sacred books should be interpreted like any other book.

No mistake would be greater than to assume that the thorough and sincere application of the method here indicated is necessarily fatal to religious belief in every mind, or even in every mind of great power. What its effects may be in the long-run on an entire community is another question—a question on which some light will perhaps be thrown in the following pages. At present we have to note the undoubted fact that there have been religionists of high ability and culture who, after submitting their belief to such an ordeal, have carried it out unscathed and even confirmed. But it is equally a fact that such thinkers are regarded with grave suspicion by the majority of their own religious community; that they seldom accept the popular creed of that community in its entirety; and that their own disciples not seldom push religious negation to its extreme. Hence the rational theologian, while repudiating the name of rationalist for himself, is liable to be taxed

with rationalism by his less adventurous co-religionists. And from this we may gather that our analysis is still incomplete. In short, a result as well as a method is involved in the meaning of the term under consideration, or rather it is assumed that the method can only lead to one result, which is a negation. In still plainer language rationalism is the mental habit of using reason for the destruction of religious belief.[1]

It will be observed that in this definition of rationalism the extent to which the destructive process is carried remains undetermined. In point of fact it varies considerably as between different enquirers, different countries, and different ages, the demands of criticism trenching more or less on the province reserved to faith, while their respective points of view remain as sharply distinguished as ever. To trace these variations and to assign them to their proper causes is the business of the historian, the interest and value of whose work depends on the success with which it is performed.

In defining the issues of a controversy carried on at all times with feelings of bitter animosity among the majority at least of the partisans arrayed on either side one anticipates a certain difficulty in hitting off a formula equally acceptable to both. And in the present instance it seems possible that neither party will feel quite satisfied. Many religious persons will be reluctant to admit that reason, properly so-called, can be destructively applied to their beliefs. And many rationalists may demur to the ascription, in their case, of a purely negative function to reason—that reason without which the vast structure

[1] Some readers would no doubt have been better pleased if I had substituted 'theological dogmas' for 'religious beliefs.' I have chosen the latter term not from any desire to be needlessly offensive, but because it is more generally intelligible. And the very existence of such a distinction as the substitution would imply is disputed by most religious believers. Cardinal Newman tells us that by 'Religion' he means 'the knowledge of God, of His Will, and of our duties towards Him' ('Grammar of Assent,' p. 389). This would not be accepted as a satisfactory definition by a Buddhist or a Positivist. But in fact it will cover all the religious beliefs with which the rationalism whose history I am writing has had to deal. Elsewhere or at other times rationalists might quite conceivably turn their criticism against the religious beliefs of Buddhism or Positivism; but such attacks do not concern us now. And as my subject is so limited I shall on occasion have no scruple in using 'theology' as synonymous with religion, and 'dogma' with religious belief. In fact they are a definite, systematic presentation of what rationalism controverts.

of our positive knowledge would not exist. Both objections may be met by an appeal to that great arbiter of language, the usage of well-educated people in literature and conversation. Outside strictly scientific treatises that definition is best which best exhibits in abstract form what is common to all or most of the particular facts denoted by a word. And in a literary definition like this of rationalism the terms involved must themselves be taken in a somewhat popular and elastic sense. Thus 'reason' must be allowed for the present to bear the meaning ordinarily attached to that word without prejudice to any distinction that may hereafter be proposed between the universal and the individual, or the higher and the lower reason, or between the reason and the understanding. And when we speak about its destructive action on religious belief, 'destructive' must be understood to connote the wish and intention of the rationalist rather than the actual success of his hostile operations.

But should the scruples of the religious believer not yet be appeased, we must beg to remind him that there are a good many religions in the world besides his own, and consequently many religious beliefs that in his opinion, or if that be too mild an expression, to his knowledge, are false. Now, how does he prove that they are false? Why, simply by showing that they are irreconcilable with one another, or with generally acknowledged truth; or, finally, because they conflict with his own creed, which he knows to be true. But in each case he is assuming the first principle of all reasoning, which is that mutually contradictory propositions cannot both be true; in other words, he is making that destructive application of reason to religious belief which appears to be the end and aim of rationalism. At the same time the religious controversialist cannot properly be called, and indeed never is called, a rationalist, simply because his primary object is not to destroy religious belief as such, or to replace it by purely natural knowledge, but to substitute one religious belief for another.

Against such a merely negative use of his name the rationalist may, as I have said, conceivably protest. His mind may be well stored with positive convictions built up by logical processes; and his hostility to religion may proceed not from love of negation as such, but from the jealous hatred

with which those convictions are assailed by religious believers. But such claims, however well founded, cannot be allowed to interfere with the proprieties of language. Custom has ruled that the submission of belief to pure reason shall be called rationality in reference to every branch of natural knowledge, and rationalism only when it leads to the rejection of those supernaturalist beliefs with which religion has become identified. And the distinction is not only customary but highly convenient. It offers one of the few instances of a party-name which can be bestowed without offence and accepted without reluctance. While not implying the necessity of any positive convictions beyond confidence in the validity of pure reason, it leaves room, as we have just seen, for the presence of such convictions to any extent, so only that they harmonise with reason and consciously operate to the exclusion of some or all religious beliefs; indeed, the more of such convictions any one holds, the more of a rationalist he will be. Thus the history of rationalism is no mere chronicle of successive negations; it has to trace the growth of positive ideas in so far as they have come into conflict with religious ideas.

Apart from such considerations, it seems to me, I must confess, that the prejudice against negative criticism, so rife throughout the whole of the nineteenth century and sanctioned by many great names even among the rationalists themselves, is unjust, and even a little childish. If the ascertainment of truth is desirable, then the removal of error must also be desirable as a means towards that end. But if so, the legitimacy of negative criticism is measured only by its success; in this instance, at least, right is coincident with might. Nor is it enough that the work of demolition should have been performed once, to the satisfaction of a few advanced thinkers. A knowledge of the results and methods of criticism must be diffused through all classes of society, and its processes repeated for every new generation, until the old illusions have been definitely replaced by new truths. The work of clearance is slow, and many are apt to imagine that it is complete when it has only just begun. In military language the country supposed to be conquered has been merely overrun; and the invading army which seemed on the eve of occupying the enemy's capital suddenly finds itself surrounded, overpowered, and disarmed.

Such surprises are commonly accounted for by an alleged law of reaction; and there can be no objection to the phrase if only the underlying facts are properly understood. Reactions in the sense of a return to opinions that have been once renounced by a majority of the individuals composing a community are rare, if indeed they ever occur. But the real opinions of the majority are very liable to be overborne and silenced by a small band of daring innovators; especially when the official exponents of the popular creed happen to be associated with the maintenance of unpopular abuses. Remove the abuses, or give the threatened interests time to reorganise their defences, and advocates enough will be found to reassert the old beliefs with a display of argument sufficient to satisfy the logical requirements of the multitude by whom they have never been wholly abandoned. Rationalism, voted out of date by an overwhelming majority, is in its turn silenced and overborne. Literature and science assume a decidedly pietistic tinge; and philosophy addresses itself to the familiar task of harmonising the opposite extremes in the synthesis of a higher unity.

Such was the fate that actually befell rationalism at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the movement of uninstructed opinion to which it would in any case have temporarily succumbed being enormously strengthened by the accidental association of negative criticism with the destructive fury of the French Revolution. Hence a peculiar odium became attached to the anti-religious aspects of pre-revolutionary philosophy, as if they were responsible for the Terror or for Napoleon's devastating career. Nor was this feeling limited to the reactionary party. A new school of thinkers arose, who, while adopting to the fullest extent the negative results reached by Voltaire and Hume, affected a somewhat depreciatory tone in their references to those great men, and habitually discouraged any return to their methods. But in truth they erred by overestimating rather than by underestimating what Voltaire and Hume had accomplished, at least to the extent of believing that the ground had been effectually cleared for their own theoretical reconstructions, in profound ignorance of the formidable obstacles still presented by popular theology. And much of what seems confused or desultory or inconclusive in the controversies of the last century may be traced to a certain want of lucidity, to an

unwarrantable assumption on the one side that negative criticism is superfluous, on the other side that it is superannuated, and on both that it has been superseded. Rationalism in its old sense has, we are told, been displaced by the historic method, a method to which both sides in the religious controversy appeal with confidence in verification of their claims.

This assertion, however, involves a complete misapprehension of the controversy itself. The issues have been widened rather than transformed. We have already observed that rationalism, though destructive in its aim, is not purely negative in its procedure: rationalists do not limit themselves to pointing out contradictions in the propositions they attack, but they also attempt to show that the pretensions of theology are irreconcilable with certain positive truths. Or, again, when it is claimed that particular facts of experience, or more particularly of religious experience, can only be explained by reference to supernatural agencies, the rationalist maintains that they can be explained as well or better by natural law; as, for instance, the appearance of the human race by evolution from lower animals, alleged miracles by misapprehension or prejudice, the rapid spread of a new faith by political, social, or economic causes, and so forth. Now, a very slight analysis will show that here also the logical weapon of contradiction is employed; only, whereas religious beliefs were represented before as being inconsistent with themselves, the historic method exhibits them in their inconsistency with what we briefly call science, that is to say, with truths established by the most stringent methods, and always accepted by the theologians themselves when they have no religious interests to uphold.

So far, then, from being opposed to rationalism, the historic method is no more than a particular application of the fundamental postulate on which all destructive criticism ultimately rests. As such it is always an interesting and often an effective line of argument. It appeals very strongly to a certain class of minds, those who never willingly surrender one belief until it has been replaced by another, and on whom the belief of others acts like a spell that can only be broken by explaining the circumstances of its origin. But it has the disadvantage of shifting the burden of proof on to the wrong shoulders, of seeming to admit that theological explanations hold the field

until they have been replaced by scientific explanations. As a consequence of this apparent concession, theological controversialists soon learn to take the offensive, and show themselves proficients in the use of sceptical weapons, among which ridicule is not the last to be employed. And when the new theory has been reasoned down, or laughed down, or cried down, it is assumed that no alternative remains but to accept the old theory once more.

If the positive results of scientific reasoning and observation should succeed in holding their own against the negative criticism of religious believers, another system of tactics is brought into play. The new views are no longer disputed; but they are now declared to be perfectly compatible with the old faith, and indeed strongly to confirm it. Such a change of front is, after all, no more than what the rationalist need expect. According to him, religious believers are trained to inconsistency, and have long been accustomed to entertain mutually inconsistent propositions as concurrent expressions of absolute truth. What wonder, then, that they should accept another set of propositions, the incompatibility of which with their creed is probably less flagrant than the incompatibility of that creed with itself? But so much logical modesty survives even among the most credulous that they are not always willing to embrace the incompatibility when presented in naked terms. To suit the requirements of such persons, more or less ingenious reconciliations are manufactured, and enjoy a popularity inversely proportioned to their philosophic value; so that critics who disdained the comparatively easy task of directly applying reason to the destruction of religious error have to undergo the more irksome drudgery of disentangling a web where error and truth are intertwined.

Reference has already been made to a weapon frequently employed by modern rationalism in its controversy with theology, the method of explanation. But the range of this weapon seems often to be misapprehended. To show how a belief came into existence is not necessarily to show that it is false. All beliefs, true and false alike, have been evolved, that is to say, they have been formed by a process of gradual growth, a process in which the earlier stages often differ so widely from

the later that there may seem to be nothing in common between them. There is, however, one class of beliefs that are considerably weakened, if they are not entirely destroyed, by what may be called the evolutionary method. These are the beliefs based on authority, for which no other ground than authority can be given. The general principle of authority as a source of faith is one on which a good deal will have to be said hereafter. In the present connexion no more is meant than the general plea that a proposition must be true because it has always been believed by all mankind, or by a great many people in different places and for a long time past, or by some highly gifted individual with good means of knowing the truth. Now, if it can be shown that the person or persons quoted have been led to entertain the belief in question, not by a candid examination of the evidence, but by some baseless prejudice or by some fallacious course of observation and reasoning—in short, by some process out of relation with the correspondence necessarily existing between a true belief and objective reality—then their authority has been to that extent destroyed, and the belief, if supported by no other evidence, must be abandoned. For instance, if it can be shown that theism was evolved out of the belief in fetiches, or totems, or powerful ancestral ghosts, or some other equally delusive imagination, then theism, whatever other reasons we may have for accepting it, can hardly appeal to the argument from universal consent once so triumphantly urged in its favour. But those other reasons, if any, retain the same value as before.

Again, when it is mentioned that some particular institution or literature or book presents such unique marks of supernatural origin or guidance or protection that we must needs accept its teaching as divine and infallible, the rationalist tries to show that the institution or literature or book for which this august derivation is claimed can be sufficiently accounted for as the product of unaided human faculty. But here also his assault, if successful, affects the authority rather than the substance, the credentials rather than the *credenda* of religion. And it always remains open to the theologian to disprove or deny his explanation, or to trust to the advance of speculation to supersede it—an almost inevitable incident when conjecture is easier than verification, and the theorists are more numerous than the facts.

Once more, to take the latest phase of modern rationalism, there are certain dogmas, such as the Atonement and the Real Presence, that have been habitually screened from the attacks of reason behind a veil of mystery as truths too deep for human intelligence to fathom. Now, this veil the new criticism tears away by tracing back the alleged mystery to the belief of primitive races, in whose case they are universally regarded as evidences of the grossest ignorance and superstition. How theologians in general regard so compromising a genealogy has not as yet appeared. But some of them seem prepared to evade the difficulty by extending the notion of divine revelation so as to embrace totemism and other savage religions which their predecessors would have ascribed to suggestions proceeding from a precisely opposite quarter. Thus modern orthodox apologists are beginning to find an intuition of the supreme verities in what rationalists regard as a peculiarly hideous type of ritual murder followed by a loathsome cannibal feast.[1] And there seems to be no hope of deciding the quarrel until we appeal from the historical method to older and simpler principles of reasoning.

It appears, then, that the explanatory, positive, or evolutionary type of rationalism, although, as I have said, more interesting and more congenial to our modern habits of thought than the analytical, negative, and, so to speak, revolutionary type that we associate with eighteenth-century philosophy, in reality rather supplements than supersedes it. When it has been shown that certain widely spread beliefs are not founded on fact, nothing can be more natural and reasonable than to ask ourselves, on what, then, are they founded? And apart from scientific curiosity there is, as we have seen, a strong controversial motive for undertaking the enquiry. In no other way can the claims of authority be finally dissipated. In no other way can the lingering dissatisfaction of former adherents be finally set at rest. Only the rationalist must take good care to prove that this or that religious belief *is* an illusion before he proceeds to show how the illusion came to be entertained. It would be premature to explain why the earth seems to be stationary if astronomy had not demonstrated that it is moving.

[1] See Mr. W. R. Inge's Essay in 'Contentio Veritatis,' p. 272.

In order to elucidate still further the essential meaning and function of rationalism, it will be useful to review briefly certain terms with which it is apt to be confounded in popular phraseology. In this connexion the first that occurs to me is materialism. I have heard the two spoken of as if they were exactly synonymous and interchangeable denominations. Now, any reader who has given the least attention to the foregoing analysis of rationalism, and who attaches any definite meaning to the word materialism, will see at once how great a misconception is involved in their identification. The materialist holds a particular theory about the nature of things. He believes that the universe consists of what we call matter, that is a substance without cause, without purpose, originally without consciousness, and subject only to the mechanical laws of attraction and repulsion, impact and pressure. Our consciousness, according to him, has been derived from this substance, but has no influence on its movements, and perishes with the dissolution of our bodies. A rationalist may hold this or any other theory of the universe that seems to him consistent with reason, or he may abstain from such speculations altogether; his method only commits him to the belief that there is an absolute all-embracing reality existing independently of our individual consciousness, the events of which occur according to a fixed order entirely consistent with itself, and quite unaffected by our thoughts and wishes, except in so far as they enter into it as determining antecedents. At the present moment all materialists are probably rationalists, that is, they have been brought up in religious beliefs to the destruction of which their reason has subsequently been applied. But one might easily conceive a state of society in which materialism should be authoritatively taught, and accepted with no more exercise of reason than is now involved in repeating any religious creed or catechism by rote. The pupils in such a school would be materialists without being rationalists. And certainly there are many rationalists of various shades who repudiate and make war on materialism as involving contradictions no less flagrant than those contained in any theological scheme.

Rationalism coincides much more nearly with what is called freethought, but is less purely negative in its implications. A freethinker would presumably admit that he was bound by the

laws of logic; but his name has not the advantage of acknowledging that intellectual duty. It was no doubt originally coined as a protest against the imposition of religious beliefs by authority—a protest equally, though less directly, conveyed by the word rationalism. But authority, as will presently appear, is only one motive in that very complex and variable frame of mind by which religious belief is guarded against the destructive application of reason.

Scepticism was formerly used as a rather polite word for the more or less complete rejection of religious belief, but is now with great advantage being restored to its ancient signification of doubt and suspension of judgment as distinguished from complete denial, and of doubt not limited to any particular department of belief. So understood, scepticism is in high favour with theological apologists; and in the course of this enquiry it will appear to be rather an enemy than a friend of true rationalism.

Agnosticism, like scepticism, is good Greek, and, though never used by the Greeks, might well have obtained currency among their philosophers, had one of them ever thought of coining it. Singularly enough, we do not owe this very expressive term to a Hellenist, but to a distinguished physiologist, who did his best to spoil his own creation, though fortunately without success, neither he nor any one else having ever employed it in the sense of his own definition. Professor Huxley, when he publicly assumed the title of an agnostic, declared its essential principle to be 'that it is wrong for a man to say that he is certain of the objective truth of any proposition unless he can produce evidence which logically justifies that certainty.'[1] Surely agnosticism by usage and etymology alike is concerned not with moral restrictions on the profession of belief, but with intellectual restrictions on human knowledge. One so well read in the history of philosophy as Huxley might have remembered that various thinkers have propounded systems of the universe containing propositions which they, honestly no doubt, held to be 'logically justified by the evidence,' but which any agnostic would at once rule out as asserting what lies beyond the power of reason to ascertain. To mention only two names, Spinoza and Hegel might have

[1] 'Science and Christian Tradition,' p. 310.

accepted every word of Huxley's definition; yet no critic with any regard to the proprieties of language would call either of them an agnostic. For agnosticism most assuredly implies that there are unknowables, and that the ultimate constitution of reality is among the number. Now, Spinoza's system was the very type of those speculations whose hopelessness Hume and Kant, Huxley's most revered masters, tried to demonstrate; while Hegel was the most conspicuous figure in the reaction against their attempt to restrict the limits of what can be known. Huxley's definition covers rationalism in the wide sense, but altogether omits the differentiating note of agnosticism, as indicated by the etymology of the word, and as universally understood by educated persons, which is that of a power behind phenomena we know and can know nothing except at most the bare fact of its existence.

Now, it may be said of rationalism in the narrower sense here affixed to it that it is ignorant of such ignorance. It is no more responsible for the agnostic's limitation of knowledge to phenomena than for the materialist's limitation of reality to mass and motion. In truth the agnostic begins where the rationalist leaves off. Having convinced himself that the course of nature has never been interrupted by a divine revelation, and that the arguments for natural theism are not less futile than those for the truth of any particular religion, he examines the alternative explanations of the universe and finds them equally unsatisfactory. Finally, he asks for an explanation of the fact that there is no explanation forthcoming, and finds it, as he thinks, in the very nature of knowledge, in its essential relativity. Throughout the appeal is to reason, and to reason alone. But reason in the hands of the agnostic is applied to the destruction of non-religious metaphysics rather than to the destruction of religious belief.

Of those who in England accept the extreme results of rationalism, the immense majority call themselves, and are called by others, agnostics. Few among them perhaps could define their position with strict logical accuracy, but all are probably aware that it could be expressed with sufficient clearness by saying to the theologians, 'Because I reject your self-contradictory explanation of things, I am not therefore bound to replace it by one of my own. After all, I am only

following your own example. You accept the existence of a personal creator as an ultimate fact that we cannot go behind. I stop at the existence of the universe, which at any rate has the advantage that you and I are both agreed in admitting it, and in my opinion the further advantage that I am not obliged to credit it with inconsistent attributes.'

Such an attitude is exceedingly irritating to orthodox controversialists, some of whom not many years since betrayed their feelings by the rather unworthy device of proposing to use the old word 'infidel' instead of 'agnostic.' Their attempt provoked a controversy which soon ran off on totally irrelevant issues, the original question being tacitly decided in favour of the new name. It may be surmised that motives of social urbanity rather than of logical propriety determined the result. Infidelity is associated not only with the theoretical substitution of reason for faith, but also and still more with the criminal breach of engagements, conjugal and pecuniary, for which agnostics profess no less respect than religious believers, and which believers, in proportion to their numbers, violate perhaps not less frequently than agnostics. There is indeed much the same objection to calling agnostics or any other class of rationalists infidels that there would be to calling their opponents gnostics or irrationalists. Such appellations are not only offensive, but misleading; and we can never be sure that their object is not to insinuate an odious charge under cover of a cowardly equivocation. And, apart from moral considerations, a theologian who is not absolutely blinded by fanaticism must see that, as agnosticism stands not for religious disbelief in general, but for a particular shade of unbelief, that shade had better, for the sake of controversial convenience, be distinguished by a particular name. Deists, pantheists, and atheists agree with agnostics in rejecting the idea of a supernatural revelation, but differ from them and agree with Christian believers in claiming for the human intelligence a knowledge of things in themselves. And it was just to connote the abnegation of all such knowledge, whether professedly derived from reasoning or from revelation, that the term agnostic, whatever may have been the intention of its original author, was taken up and widely adopted.

Still, however censurable it may be, this attempted revival

of an obnoxious epithet, in connexion with the present enquiry it will be found to suggest an important line of thought. Infidelity implies the absence of faith where faith is expected, just as rationalism, when used in a disparaging sense, implies the illegitimate extension of reason to a region where truth cannot be ascertained—or at least not completely and satisfactorily ascertained—by the methods successfully practised in the acquisition of ordinary knowledge. In other words, religion has a logic of its own distinct from and even opposed to the ordinary logic; and the most general name for this logic is Faith. But faith, as I have already observed, is a complex and variable notion; and we must decompose it into its constituent principles if we would understand the forces against which rationalism has to contend. Authority has already been mentioned as one of these. Under the form of a principle consciously entertained it is the oldest, the most widely diffused, and perhaps even now in the most advanced communities the most potent of all. With this principle, therefore, we may fitly begin, premising only that for the sake of uniformity it will sometimes be referred to under the name of Traditionalism.

People generally believe what they are told; and, whatever cynics may say to the contrary, they are on the whole justified in this assurance. What our habitual associates say to us is almost always meant for the truth, and for all practical purposes almost always *is* the truth. Without such customary veracity, indeed, nothing would be gained by telling lies, just as thieves could not live if honesty were not the rule. But the habit of accepting what is said as truth, although confirmed by the experiences of adult life, originates in the much more deep-seated experiences of youth, and is guaranteed by the survival of the fittest. All properly educated children are brought up, and are rightly brought up, on the principle of unquestioning submission to authority, not only as regards actions, but also as regards opinions, and with the assurance that their teachers are well-informed and sincere. The doubter and reasoner of the nursery or the schoolroom, unless speedily cured of his vicious habit, is little likely to increase the sum of knowledge in his riper years; nor is he much less disqualified for fruitful enquiry if the insincerity and hypocrisy of his elders rather

than any innate scepticism are responsible for his questioning attitude.

Nor is it only the dictates of their parents and other teachers that the young must take on trust. *Pari passu* with the education of the schoolroom there goes on the still more efficacious education of the playground, the training of children by children in habits of deference to anonymous public opinion and blind acceptance of traditional standards. Even disobedience to law has its own laws, full of minute and exacting prescriptions, with which individual choice is not permitted to tamper. It may, indeed, be objected that obedience and belief are not the same thing; and this is true so far as the advanced stages of mental development are concerned. But it is equally true that in the earlier stages they are almost indistinguishable, and that a training in either is a training in both.

In after life a little, but only a little, more latitude of judgment is permitted. It seldom goes beyond the liberty of choosing what authority one is to follow. And here the first faint dawn of reasoned criticism may be discerned. For to assume that when two authorities disagree both cannot be right is to admit the first principle of all reasoning, the self-consistency of truth. And in canvassing the respective claims of two or more conflicting authorities, reason has another chance of being heard; although here also the decision frequently falls to some other authority, not perhaps recognised as such, but none the less independent of, or even opposed to, reason; as, for instance, when the Church of England is recommended to our allegiance on the ground that she follows a middle course, and that the middle course must be right—a purely arbitrary assumption, no more true than that one or other of the opposite extremes must be right. But more often, perhaps, the determining influence is directly personal, and avowedly adopted for its personal value; as when the conversion of John Henry Newman to Roman Catholicism was immediately followed by that of hundreds who had been waiting for a lead from their revered spiritual guide. And Newman himself had been brought, after long hesitation, to the final step of secession by a passage in which St. Augustine appeals with confidence to the united judgment of the whole world. Yet the slightest reflexion would have told him that the Catholic Church of St. Augustine's

time was but a small fraction of the earth's population, and was controlled by a small minority of its own members. Nor if the most complete unanimity of dogmatic belief had then or at any other time been attained, would the world's judgment have been secured against an appeal to posterity.

If the principle of authority retains so much energy even among ourselves, and in minds familiar with the most arduous exercises of reason, what must have been its control over those relatively primitive communities whose beliefs are organised into a customary code and hallowed by an immemorial tradition? Now, it is from such communities that the elements of all religious belief have been handed down, and with the belief the habit of unreasoning acceptance, which is the primary form of faith.

So far the attitude of deference to authority has been referred to as if it were a simple and uniform state of mind. But in point of fact it is a rather complex condition, involving three distinct elements that may be blended in varying proportions. There is, first, the belief that our informant is, to the best of his knowledge, telling the truth; then the belief that this 'best' is real knowledge; and finally, if it is a practical question, the impulse to do as he tells us, in the conviction that what he tells us is right. In three words, we trust, we learn, and we obey. It seems probable that, historically speaking, the element here put, as logically it must be put, last came first, and that trust and learning were evolved out of obedience. Nevertheless, for our purposes the order adopted will be found most convenient.

In ordinary social intercourse, in business transactions, in the law-courts, in politics, in the organised pursuit of knowledge, these three kinds of confidence are sharply distinguished by all who have learned to think accurately; as, indeed, they could not be confused without imminent danger to our lives and fortunes. It is one thing to believe in the sincerity of our friends, and quite another thing to accept their opinions; it is possible, and with the most careful minds quite habitual, to accept as truthful their evidence about what they have heard or even seen without admitting that the real facts correspond to the story constructed out of the memory of their personal impressions. Again, although we are more ready to do what

we are told when convinced that the command is right and based on correct information, we do not think that the relation can be reversed at will, and that to behave as if we believed our informant to be right can legitimately convince us against the evidence, or without evidence, that he is right. Nor, even if he should happen to be right, do we forthwith adopt all his speculative opinions on the nature of things without examination: we do not even feel bound to adopt as valid his reasons —if he gives any—for the course of action enjoined. Still less do we admit a claim to superior authority on the ground that if it should happen to be justified our disobedience would be an act of criminal folly.

Far different is the logic of those religious believers for whom faith is identified with submission to authority. Among them all these distinctions so laboriously drawn by advancing reason are, at first unconsciously, but afterwards deliberately, wiped out. To disagree with the metaphysics of religious teachers is to impeach their character as eye-witnesses; to cross-examine their marvellous narratives is to call them liars; to disallow their pretensions is to reject the whole moral law, including even that part of it which they ignored; to obey the moral law is implicitly to admit that they are right. And even to follow their ritualistic prescriptions is to discover so many new arguments in favour of their creeds; while to cultivate the tender emotions is to give those arguments irresistible force. In short, by their own admission, or rather contention, belief is not a state of the intellect but of the affections and the will.

Recent theological apologists have appealed to modern psychology on behalf of this theory of belief, and, on a superficial view, not without some plausibility. Undoubtedly emotion influences belief by excluding some representations from the field of attention, and by giving more prominence and permanence to others. It also appears that the final assent is in the fullest sense an act, a determination of the will, just like any voluntary movement of the limbs. But it would be an error to assume that this act of assent is either arbitrary, or that it can with advantage be determined by certain interested motives. Without at present going into the general question of freewill, it may be safely affirmed that the 'will

to believe,' at any rate, is not free but determined by the balance of evidence, which will of course vary according to the mental constitution and equipment of the particular person to whom the evidence is presented. And even admitting the most unbounded latitude of choice that any one can claim in giving or withholding his assent to theoretical propositions, it will at least be granted that belief, like other kinds of action, has a standard to which the believer ought to conform. We have not far to seek for that standard; it is already familiar to us under the name of truth—the agreement of our thoughts with the absolute reality of things. In this sense logic has well been called the ethics of belief; and in framing our beliefs it is just as much a duty to discount the refracting influence of emotion as it is to guard against the disturbing influence of passion in forming resolutions of a more directly personal interest.

It would seem, then, that an analysis of belief in general fails to justify the exceptional position claimed for religious faith, and leaves no more room for authority in matters of supernatural than in matters of natural knowledge. But were the case otherwise, were that total inversion and confusion of the relations, elsewhere recognised as legitimate, between intelligence, emotion, and action, which has been preached in aid of religious belief, to be tolerated, no particular religion would find its logical position thereby improved; nor indeed would religion in general be better off as against irreligion. For authority, like the Ares of Homer, is a fickle divinity, equally ready to fight on either side. There is no form of belief or of unbelief on whose behalf the emotions, and through them the will, cannot be engaged. Christianity on its first introduction into the world had to make way against the established laws of the state with an immemorial tradition at their back; it is still confronted in the East by faiths of more venerable antiquity, and in one instance numbering more millions of adherents than itself; while in the West it has to struggle with an increasing body of dissentients who claim to speak with the voice of future and more enlightened generations. Such comparisons merely breed a desire to try conclusions by a more summary method than a census of living or dead or still unborn adherents. Argument is replaced by

invective, and invective leads to violence, taking the form either of street-riots or of a trial of strength in the polling-booths, the legislature, and the law-courts. Thus the substitution of authority for reason leads to that very anarchy which it was the boast of authority to prevent.

In the early stages of social as well as of individual evolution authority is obeyed unquestioningly because unconsciously, without any examination of its credentials, and without any limitation of its claims. But sooner or later, as we have seen, a time comes when authoritative dicta are found to be at variance with one another or with the lessons of accumulated experience. This conflict is decided in the first instance by an appeal to some higher or nearer authority. But, besides the fact that such appeals cannot be carried on for ever, the very sense of inconsistency opens the door to reason as the final arbitrator of belief. Indeed, the conscious recognition of authority as a guide to certainty originates, and can only originate, with reason, which is the sole creator of general ideas. And so, reasonably enough, it was a philosopher, indeed the greatest of all philosophers, Plato, the first self-conscious representative and champion of reason as against the general verdict of public opinion, who ended by invoking the universal and immemorial religious tradition of mankind as against the argumentative irreligion of his contemporaries. It is, he says, impossible to hear the existence of the gods denied with any patience. How scandalous that men should be found to disbelieve in beings whose existence was assumed as unquestionable by their mothers and nurses, and to whom as children they must often have seen sacrifices offered and prayers addressed, more particularly the sun and moon, who are well known to be devoutly worshipped by all mankind, without distinction of race or civilisation! When people are so foolish and wicked as to disregard such evidence, it would be a waste of words to dispute with them.[1] No more unfortunate test-case could well have been chosen, and no more emphatic warning against traditionalism could have been supplied. Not many centuries were to elapse before the whole power of the state was employed to suppress the last remains of this

[1] 'Laws,' 887–8.

traditional sun-worship in the name of a still older tradition, on whose behalf Plato's own authority was frequently and with justice invoked.

Still more complete, and far swifter in the tragic irony of its dialectical retribution, was the fate that overtook the last philosophic advocate of universal suffrage in religion, as Plato had been its first—one who, though not to be compared with Plato as a thinker or a writer, still ranks high among the literary glories of modern France. I refer to the celebrated Lamennais, at once the most eloquent exponent of the great Catholic reaction which followed the French Revolution, and of the return from that reaction to another era of free enquiry. Nourished on the writings of Rousseau, this wayward genius, after a long struggle with religious scepticism, takes priest's orders in middle life, publishes a work basing Rome's claim to infallibility on the consentient authority of the whole human race, combats the liberal politicians in the name of a more radically popular principle, visits Rome to win papal support for a wild scheme of theocratic social democracy, and, failing utterly, sacrifices the remoter authority of the Church to the more immediate authority of the people, flings off his cassock, discards supernatural Christianity, and dies without accepting the ministrations of religion.

Thus the principle of authority, when its supporters make a last rally on the ground of antiquity and universality—*quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*—hardly deserves a set refutation, and may safely be left, so far as logic goes, to what philosophers call the immanent dialectic and spontaneous decomposition of every false principle when worked out to its furthest consequences. But in reference to what more nearly concerns us here, namely the psychology of unreasoned religious belief, I may observe that the note of long tradition strikes a more readily responsive chord in the logically untrained mind than the note of world-wide diffusion, which is always a sustaining rather than an originating force. Granting what has already been insisted on, a primitive instinct of obedience, a tendency to believe what we are told and to do as we are told, there is an opposing tendency—whether primitive or not matters little—to revolt against every assumption of authority over us and jealously to question its claims. Now, there can be no surer means of neutralising this rebellious impulse, at

least with the mass of mankind, than for our informant to represent himself as conveying the intelligence or the commands with which he is charged from another informant who similarly seems to be a mere channel of communication from some remoter source. For the mental representation of this process, besides annulling jealousy, calls out the powerful instinct of imitation, prompting a mental repetition of the message received to some imaginary auditor, than which there can be no more potent means of converting an impression into a conviction—if indeed the will to repeat be not itself the intellectual act which constitutes belief. Thus by a process like that concerned in the maintenance of family life, which in passion also it resembles, individual belief becomes a link in the tradition binding an illimitable future to an immemorial past. Any statement, true or false, handed down by authoritative tradition becomes in this way a matter of faith; and very much of human knowledge or error with regard to what goes on in the world of observation has at various times taken on this character of passionate unreasoned conviction. But such traditions can never be quite free from the disturbing influence of individual experience in the way of verification or correction, so that with them the force of pure suggestion can never operate undisturbed; while religious tradition, in so far as it relates to the unseen, suffers only from the disturbances of mysticism, a force which must be reserved for separate treatment.

Still more important than this comparative immunity from the intrusions of contradictory experience is the peculiar affinity of religious belief to the form of authoritative tradition, an affinity that makes tradition the best means for bringing it home to ordinary minds. Whatever view may be taken of the origin of religion, this much, I presume, will be admitted, that in the more developed forms of theology the unseen objects of adoration are conceived as related to their worshippers and to one another in ways suggested by the various forms of human association, above all by the family, the school, and the state. Now, these associations themselves supply the mechanism through which religious instruction is conveyed, and therefore such instruction is, so to speak, an object-lesson in the conceptions that the religious teacher has for his office to impart. For past and future are linked together in the state by power, in the

school by wisdom, in the family by love. And in the most highly developed form of theology it is just these three qualities of power, wisdom, and love idealised and personified that figure as the essential characteristics of divinity, nay, as the very substance of which divinity is made. But through these also, as embodied in those earthly institutions of which I have spoken, is religious belief transmitted and maintained. Close parallelism passes into complete identity; creeds become their own verification; and so in the most highly developed of all religions faith has been exalted to the highest degree of convinced and self-evidencing assent.

Nevertheless, here also the nemesis of violated reason is not far off, and the hollowness of such self-realising convictions quickly makes itself felt. Religion, to maintain itself against or side by side with the truths of experience, must hold fast to an objective existence not ourselves, which we did not create, but which created us, and which is totally independent of our opinions about it. Such are the realities with which science deals; and any attempt to distinguish in this respect between religion and science can only end in opposing them to one another as fiction is opposed to fact. No rationalist ever said more than that religious belief was a subjective illusion; and to dwell on the self-verifying power of faith comes perilously near to an admission that the rationalist is right.

Human nature is not so constituted that the dialectical dissolution of what is false leads necessarily and immediately to the recognition of what is true. After exhausting the resources of authority, faith has recourse to mysticism rather than to reason; and in the foregoing analysis we found ourselves at a point where the boundary seemed to be reached, if not overstepped. But before proceeding to an account of mysticism as an element of religious belief, it seems desirable to pause and reconsider the general relations between reason and authority in the light of certain objections that may be raised against the positions assumed in the foregoing discussion.

To begin with, opponents of rationalism may urge that these two great sources of belief are not necessarily at variance with one another. What has at first been taken on trust is afterwards, in many cases, seen to be demonstrable truth. What has once for all been demonstrated to the satisfaction of competent judges

is afterwards, in most cases, accepted on their word by those who have neither the ability nor the leisure to follow long chains of inference to their logical conclusion, to test the observations from which they start, or to repeat the experiments by which they are confirmed. In this way the mass of mankind accept the established results of physical science without criticism and with no more verification than is furnished by their successful application to the purposes of common life. And there are besides an enormous number of facts which we all of us, the learned as well as the unlearned—indeed the learned much more than the unlearned —are compelled to take on trust, the facts of history in particular. For these we have at best the authority of eye-witnesses beyond the reach of cross-examination, and in most cases merely the tradition, more or less diluted, of what an eye-witness is supposed to have said. Yet here also reason and authority go hand in hand, for it is reasonable to accept such evidence when by the nature of things no other can be obtained. Why should religious belief be subjected to more stringent tests than any other belief?

To such a plea the reply of rationalism, if I am not much mistaken, runs somewhat as follows: The authority of experts on matters of opinion, as distinguished from matters of observation, is only taken subject to certain conditions, not one of which your so-called authorities fulfil. Experience must show that in a number of cases sufficient to constitute a valid induction statements made by experts have on examination proved true. The experts must be unanimous, or, if there be a dissentient minority, very strong reasons must be given for distrusting their opinion. Finally, so far from denouncing criticism, they must welcome it, and must offer every opportunity for verifying their statements, making no secret of the much higher esteem in which they hold those whose agreement with them is inferential than those with whom it is deferential. The difference between such authority and what passes under the name among theologians is the difference between a convertible and an inconvertible paper currency. The one passes readily from hand to hand because it can be exchanged at any moment for the cash that it represents. The other can be kept in circulation only by making the refusal to accept it an offence. As to authority in matters of history, the same rules apply to some extent. Here also experience must show that eye-witnesses do

on the whole faithfully report what they have seen, and that they see what actually happens. The witnesses, if there are several, must agree, or their disagreement must be explained, as also must be the silence of those, if any, who would naturally have reported the alleged occurrence had it come within their cognisance. But this is a point on which rationalists need neither enlarge nor refine. The canons of modern criticism as applied to Greek and Roman history offer a type of the method which, according to them, should be applied to all history; and to demand that the history of any particular people or period should be exempt from such criticism because it embodies a religious tradition is to place the principle of authority in opposition to the principle of reason.

On the other hand, it will be urged by many that their religious belief is either independent of authority or depends on it only to such an extent as reason approves. For the most general facts of what they call their religious experience they appeal to the testimony of consciousness; for the historical facts by which that experience is confirmed, extended, and systematised they appeal to the evidence of unimpeachable witnesses, preserved in well authenticated records. Such a position has unquestionably a great deal in common with the rationalistic position, and runs considerable risk of being denounced as rationalism by the strict traditionalists. Much controversy has been conducted on that common ground during the last century, and will have to occupy us hereafter. For the present two observations will suffice. In the first place, the reasonableness and moderation of certain modern apologists does not alter the fact that authority has been, and still is, invoked by great numbers of religious people as a principle before which reason is bound to give way. And in the second place, a rationalist carries away from his studies of apologetic literature a very strong impression that the new orthodoxy rests on authority just as much as the old; the real basis of belief being concealed from view by a very flimsy superstructure of argument. For, in his opinion, the alleged proofs are such as would not pass muster in any logical review, were not the strongest religious prejudices interested in their admission. As regards the testimony of consciousness, it certainly does carry us outside the domain of tradition, but

without necessarily carrying us into the domain of reason. In truth this alleged evidence of an unseen reality comes under another principle of religious belief, generally known as mysticism, to which reference has been already made, and to the analysis of which our attention must now be directed.

A tradition can have no higher claim on our belief than what belongs to the authority whence it is ultimately derived; and this authority, being enfeebled by every repetition, is weaker than the weakest link in the chain of transmission. This decreasing force of evidence is, however, logical rather than psychological, and is felt by reason only, not by faith. Faith indeed is, as we have seen, rather strengthened than weakened by dependence on an immemorial tradition, a tradition not referable to any specific origin, of which, in the words of Antigone,[1] no one knows whence it came. Even when certain beliefs are traced back to a direct revelation from heaven, that is rather a picturesque way of expressing their supreme sanctity than a real argument for their acceptance, as is shown by the significant fact that belief in the revelation soon becomes no less imperative than belief in the doctrine revealed. But the case is altered when a change of faith has to be justified, or when existing faiths have to be defended against the incipient assaults of reason. Confronted by Creon's doctrine of state-sovereignty in matters of religion, Antigone has to justify herself, not only by an appeal to immemorial custom, but also by an appeal to Zeus and the goddess of Right.[1] In such circumstances the doctrine of revelation becomes a pressing and practical interest; distinctions are drawn between true and false prophecies, between the mere prophet and the specially accredited envoy of God; old-established authorities have to measure themselves against the claims of individual inspiration. And it is through these claims, through the pretension to hold direct intercourse with the supernatural objects of belief, that mysticism comes into view.

The personal element is of great importance. The idea of supernatural communication is indeed no new thing. All religions possess, at least before they fall into decay, a machinery for ascertaining the will of their objects. In general it is a

[1] Sophocles, 'Antigone,' 450 *sqq.*

machinery constructed on a fixed pattern, working by known laws, and placed under the control of experts. The mystic ignores or despises all such restrictions, often denouncing those who work under them as cowardly time-servers or self-interested hypocrites who conceal or pervert the message that he is charged to interpret anew. For while functioning as the chief organ of religious innovation, he does not, as a rule, consciously or intentionally innovate. His professed aim is rather to sweep away modern innovations, to restore belief and practice to their original purity. Nor is this profession always mistaken. There are conservative mystics as there are liberal mystics; the prevailing bias being determined for each individual at any moment by the balance of forces contending for the mastery within. Thus the mystic soul often becomes—and in our own time more often than ever—a battle-field where the causes of authority and reason are fought out. But whichever way the balance inclines, mystics continue to hold in common their one essential principle that true belief is an inward illumination caught straight from the central heart of things; and to that principle both authority and reason seem at first sight equally and irreconcilably opposed.

For however widely their standards of evidence may differ, authority and reason have this much in common, that they are methods of agreement and, so to speak, intellectually altruistic. Authority is nothing unless it imposes a fixed canon of belief on a whole community; nor can its representatives be satisfied until this community is made co-extensive with mankind. And reason also, though rooted in individual conviction, is originally a child of social intercourse, distrustful of its own conclusions until they commend themselves to another mind, and restless until they have been accepted by the totality of reasonable beings, that is to say, by the whole human race. But the visions of the mystic and the convincing power that goes with vision are even more shut up within his own consciousness than the proverbially incommunicable experiences of pleasure and pain. For pleasure and pain, being produced under natural conditions nearly the same for all men, can be understood and sympathised with to a considerable extent by sensitive and intelligent witnesses of their manifestations, whereas those who have never held direct intercourse with the supernatural world

cannot, as would seem, construct an imaginative representation of such intercourse, nor verify the statements of those who profess to have enjoyed it.

Nevertheless, mysticism has overcome this apparently insurmountable difficulty to the extent of having made itself a force of the highest importance in the constitution and propagation of religious belief. I may add that the very difficulty has been the great means of success. The assertion may seem paradoxical. But where all is paradoxical a paradox more or less matters little. What suggests itself as a key to the mystery is this—the genuine mystic habitually speaks and thinks about himself as chosen, without merit of his own, and without reference to the place or date of his earthly existence, by some inexplicable caprice of divinity, to be a channel for the communication of eternal truth.[1] And this consciousness of utter insignificance is not without a significance of its own. For how could the ultimate equality, or rather the utter indifference of all finite existence in presence of the infinite be better illustrated than by so disdainfully casual a choice? Nor again must the mystic's humility, his sense of weakness and dependence, be interpreted after the pattern of earthly distinctions. For self-abasement in the ordinary sense would imply a surviving consciousness of self as something separate and limited; and such consciousness is either annihilated by that sense of absorption in and identification with the infinite which for many mystics is the goal of aspiration, or it comes back purified and charged with a new meaning in that other phase of mysticism where the finite and the infinite, the individual and the universe, are conceived as a correlative couple, neither side of which can exist without the other, where man is as necessary to God as God is to man.[2] One or other of these two aspects may dominate, or they may pass into one another in never-ending bewildering alternation; but in either case the result is the same: mysticism remains essentially the principle of universal community, the doctrine of the All-One.

[1] Cf. Amos, vii., 14–15.

[2] 'Ich weiss dass ohne mich Gott nicht ein Nu kann leben,
Werd'ich zu nicht Er muss von Not den Geist auffgeben,'

—Angelus Silesius, i. 8. Many other epigrams to the same purpose might be quoted from this wonderful mystic.

And now we can understand how the mystical consciousness can become a potent instrument in the creation, revival, and conservation of religious belief. Seeing that all things are already one, the mystic does not so much desire to establish unity as to make man conscious of the unity that already prevails. His aim is not like the traditionalist's to coerce, nor like the rationalist's to convince, but to awaken. His propaganda is a light shining in darkness, a fire that warms and kindles but does not consume. His message is already written in sympathetic ink on the heart of his hearers,[1] and needs but the heat of his word to be brought out in characters of flame. We have already noted an approximation to this quickening influence in the spirit of facile imitativeness by which a tradition is caught up and transmitted. But in pure traditionalism the act of faith is essentially transitive and lives by propagation, it is a race where the torch must be passed on: mystical faith forms a chain of beacons by which light and fire are ideally communicated, while their sources remain fixed and unspent.

The illustration must not be pushed too far. Only the great mystics linked together by prophecy and retrospection across the ages can equal or transcend their predecessors in this glowing originality, this consciousness of unity with the infinite source of life in the whole. Of that primary illumination the mysticism which enters as an element into ordinary religious faith is but a feeble and flickering reflexion. Acting sometimes as a support, sometimes as a mere ornament of authoritative religion, mysticism alters the form without adding to the content of the tradition. There are three ways in which the amalgamation may be effected. First comes what may be called social mysticism. We commonly talk as if believers took their creeds on the authority of the religious community to which they belong. But the phrase applies only to the mere external profession of belief, or to such articles of a creed as are accepted without verification, like most people's notions of history and geography. Active believers do not rest content with this relation of dependence on the Church. They feel that by the very fact of membership they are contributing to its authority, to the very authority on which they believe; and this sense of unity is a particular mode of mysticism. All

[1] This was how Chalmers described Christianity to Carlyle.

corporate feeling has something of the same character, whether evoked by family, school, army, city, country, or any other community, and tends towards a personification through which the surrendered life of the component parts is returned to them in an enlarged and purified expression. The peculiarity of communities constituted by identity of religious belief lies in their power of converting that belief into what we call faith, that is a belief held, if need be, against reason by virtue of a higher evidence than reasoning on the facts of observation can afford. And this higher evidence is simply the self-consciousness of a creative act, which, in the words of the great Italian philosopher Vico, knows what it makes. The highest dogmatic expression of this mystical belief is given in the idea of a divinely human being who at once personifies the community and unites every member of it through himself with the absolute unity of things, the All-One, conceived also as a person.

Among ourselves this idea of a mystical unity giving authority to religious belief is usually associated with the claims of the Roman Catholic Church, or more remotely with those of the so-called Orthodox Church, and more feebly with those of the Anglican communion. But the privilege is one exercised in varying degrees by all Christian denominations, and by all with the same impatience of criticism; nor is there one that would not willingly identify itself with the whole of humanity. In the great historic churches the principle of mysticism has become so inextricably entwined with the principle of traditionalism that their respective contributions to individual faith cannot be accurately estimated; nor would such an analysis meet with the approval of their official apologists. But among the smaller Protestant churches the mystical element always predominates, being sustained by the greater share given to the laity in their ecclesiastical organisation, and by the employment of a more popular language in their religious meetings. And the action of these positive causes gains freer play from the absence of that historical continuity and that strongly constituted hierarchy by which the authoritative tradition of the greater churches is supported.

Nevertheless, it belongs to the paradoxical character, the unexpectedness, so to speak, of the principle with which we

are dealing, that the very mysticism they nourish and are nourished by should tend to promote the disruption of these smaller bodies and the eventual gravitation of their scattered fragments towards the great central orbs of Christendom. Chafing at the limitations of a sect necessarily narrow-minded from the disproportionate influence granted to its less educated members, and pining for something more like the mystical ideal of a world-wide community, precisely the most religious sectarians tend to break away and to drift into one or other of the churches—by preference the Roman Catholic Church—where their aspirations seem likely to meet with a fuller response. Against such tendencies a certain safeguard is provided by the phase of derivative mysticism next to be examined.

All the world's great religions offer as their credentials—or at least as a part of their credentials—a mass of documents dating from remote antiquity; and those religions with which alone we are concerned attribute this sacred literature to divine inspiration. This claim does not always originate with the writers of the books in question, some of whom would even have repudiated it as blasphemous or superstitious. But in other instances the documents do beyond doubt bear on their face the character of what professes to be a supernatural revelation; and it is from these that the whole collection has acquired its unique prestige. Such books are the production of the great mystics whose utterances take the form of communications from a higher sphere. Now, there are three ways in which religious believers, not themselves exceptionally favoured, come to the conviction that their sacred Scriptures are authentic records of a divine revelation. They may believe because they have been told so, which is the traditional method. They may believe it because the sacred writers worked miracles and foretold coming events as evidence of their supernatural gifts, which we may call the semi-rationalistic method. Or, finally, they may lay claim to as much supernatural enlightenment as shall enable them to distinguish between what is and what is not the work of a fuller and more direct inspiration in others, which is the method of secondary or derivative mysticism. Protestant pietists claim this verifying faculty in all cases where Scripture offers itself as a divine revelation,

extending its operation even to those parts of the Bible which do not describe themselves as such. In the case of these all sorts of mystical meanings have been read into documents not originally of a mystical character, dry historical records, obsolete codes, and ritualistic ordinances, in themselves of merely antiquarian interest to later ages; or perhaps I should rather say that modern believers have recourse for their several ends to a method at all times practised by the great religious mystics when embarrassed by the restraints of an authoritative literary tradition. And besides all such strained renderings there is of course the direct and literal appropriation of what the canonised mystics have had to say about their communings with the unseen.

From the mystical interpretation of Scripture we pass by a natural transition to the third form under which this seemingly incalculable source of faith allies itself with dogmatic tradition. I refer to the imaginative reading in a religious interest of nature and human life over their whole extent. The great original mystics have always loved to clothe their teaching in vivid images drawn from immediate experience of the objects and events among which their lives were spent, sometimes distinguishing themselves from the great poets only by their more strictly didactic tendencies, a true poet's aim being primarily, if not solely, the pleasure he receives and imparts. Mysticism, as cannot be too often repeated, reaches its intellectual consummation in the doctrine of the All-One, not the truly scientific doctrine that the universe is constituted of parts forming a totality where nothing can either exist or be properly understood without reference to the whole, but the doctrine of existence as an abstract self-identity, within which any distinction or separation of parts, one's own personality included, is an illusion of sense or opinion to be overcome by ascetic meditation. With mystics of the austerer type, such as Plotinus, the meditation is turned inwards, and involves a complete abstraction from sensuous perception, culminating in an ecstatic trance. The happier and more genial sort, on the contrary, look without, and create for themselves a world where the essential unity of things manifests itself by reflexion and repetition through all the infinite varieties of nature and of life. When mysticism of the second type is dominated, as within

Christianity, by a traditional monotheism, it readily interprets objects and events in the sense of a providential order where all things work together towards the final victory of good over evil—evil being understood as an attitude of self-willed independence and isolation. Believers of the more ordinary sort, the secondary and derivative mystics, when under the influence of this idea, work up their experience into a drama, with themselves as its heroes—or more frequently as its heroines—where every incident conduces towards their own private happiness. And this reading of life is singularly facilitated by the mystical indifference which welcomes good and evil fortune with equal satisfaction, as ultimately identified in the All-One. Higher and more disinterested spirits apply a similar method to the whole world's history which, according to them, is always within a measurable distance of that predestined consummation when the finite shall be swallowed up in the infinite, and the temporal in the eternal. And all alike find in the spectacle of the external world a confirmatory comment on the creed in which they have been educated or which they have adopted.

We have seen how mysticism, although it seems to be, and often is, a principle of anarchic and dispersive individuality in belief, may become an element of religious faith by reconciling itself with the claims of authoritative tradition, even reinforcing those claims by persuading the individual that his convictions have been reached through a course of private meditation, or that the church from whose dictation he accepts them draws new life from his participation in its communion. But this very alliance ultimately proves fatal to both principles by bringing out with greater clearness their inherently arbitrary and subjective character, while in particular it destroys the pretensions of mysticism to figure as an independent source of information about the hidden realities of existence. Of what value, people ask themselves, is a claim to supernatural inspiration which impartially supports every theory of the supernatural that has ever been put forth? In India the mystic is a pantheist, in Palestine a monotheist, at Alexandria some unintelligible combination of the two. Whether he sides with Arius or Athanasius is an accident of his birthplace and date. When he is the inmate of an Umbrian convent Mariolatry and transubstantiation are his delight. When he

belongs to the Society of Friends the Spirit teaches him to repudiate both. Under the tuition of Swedenborg he acquires a mass of detailed information about the unseen universe which 'mystical agnosticism,' whatever else it teaches, must teach him to discard. A very strong suspicion must be awakened that his alleged revelations, instead of being the source or verification, are merely the reflex of authoritative dictates whose origin he has forgotten. At best he speaks for himself only;[1] nor from the rationalist, at least, can he expect a hearing without giving some instance of preternatural insight in matters where his pretensions are open to verification.

When faced by a less exacting audience the mystic, like the traditionalist, appeals in the last resort to authority—to the authority of the spirit with whom he communicates for the validity of his message, to his own authority for the fact of its communication to himself. But only the greatest mystics are quite sure of their ground; and perhaps even the greatest have their hours of self-distrust. And among so suggestible a class the feeling that after all they may be deceived, if not deceivers, must grow with the increasing incredulity or indifference of their contemporaries. Some, in self-defence, have recourse to the weapons of rationalism, and develop a dialectic faculty of extraordinary strength and subtlety. Others, intellectually less gifted, or differently gifted, have recourse to methods more in unison with the spirit of personal authority, overwhelming their adversaries with rhetorical invective, or reducing them to silence by external compulsion. But as civilisation advances, bringing with it an increasing repugnance to violence in word or act, mysticism shares the general movement, and outbids the demands of toleration by evolving the last and most astounding of its paradoxes. There is, we are told, a negative moment in the All-One, or how else could it be truly *all?* Nay, more, being cannot be rightly predicated of the Absolute. Everything both is and is not. Faith and the contradiction of faith are equally true.

In presence of such an attitude one recalls the fable of the sick lion and his visitors. But whether sincere or not, the pretension to dispense with the law of contradiction cannot, of

[1] This is fully admitted by Professor William James in his 'Varieties of Religious Experience'—a book which I did not read until after this chapter was written.

course, be admitted by a rationalist. And indeed the mystic himself cannot dispute that law, since, like every other proposition, it is, according to him, both true and false.

From this extreme self-abnegation of mysticism we pass without a break to the next great bulwark of religious faith, which is the principle of scepticism. Used in this connexion, the word may awaken some surprise. But, as I have already pointed out, the slovenliness of popular phraseology must not be allowed to rob us of a valuable distinction. The rationalist properly so called is no sceptic; he does not doubt, he denies; and he denies certain propositions because they contradict what on good evidence he believes to be true. The sceptic doubts everything. He cannot be sure that there is an absolute self-existent, self-consistent order of things; or that, assuming such an order to exist, we have any means of knowing it; or that, assuming the possibility of such knowledge, the same affirmations can be made to have the same meaning for all men. His conclusions are not, as a rule, reasoned out, or are only apparently reasoned, being in fact obtained by setting the opinions of different philosophers against one another, and attributing equal authority to all. Standing at the point where the mystical tradition has reached its dialectic dissolution, he superficially generalises this into a dissolution of all truth, simply because for him truth has never had any basis but authority. Nevertheless, he continues to act as if he were surrounded by realities, by realities that can be known, and known with a knowledge accurately communicable through words. He eats and drinks, avoids passing vehicles, shows decided preferences, and freely exchanges information with his associates. All this, he tells you, is done by habit; so why not go a little further and believe by habit, that is to say, accept the prevalent religious dogmas as probably the safest, and certainly the easiest, course.

The revulsion to faith through intellectual apathy may seem a modern attitude; and so in a certain sense it is, but with a modernity that dates from the schools of Athens. The chiefs of the New Academy, their Roman disciple Cicero, and the sceptics of the empire, all professed attachment to the religion of the state. With the revival of Greek thought the same method reappeared, this time to be used in defence of an

international religion, in forms varying from the good-humoured acquiescence of Montaigne to the overbearing fanaticism of Pascal. In England scepticism has become, under a modified form, the chief official weapon of official Christianity. Our orthodox apologists have laboured to show, not indeed the weakness of dogmatists in general, but the inconsistency of the more or less rationalised religious systems from time to time set up in competition with their own, such as the Deism of the eighteenth century or the humanised Christianity of the nineteenth. Their object is, as they sometimes express it, to push their adversary over a precipice, by showing that, having gone so far, he is logically bound to go further. In other words, the arguments urged against their own religious belief may with equal or greater force be urged against the modified religious belief that he proposes to put in its place; or, if he has discarded all religion, against his ethical system, whatever that may be.

Sceptical religion in the sense of a despairing return to faith from the manifold distractions of doubt evidently amounts to no more at its best than the old appeal to authority, and is encumbered with just the same difficulties. It is equally good for all forms of Christianity, and suggests no principle by virtue of which one form should be preferred to another. Nor is this true of Christianity only. Once deny the possibility of discovering truth by reason, and all the religions of the world are placed on the same footing, including Buddhism, which, in its purest form, neither admits of a God to be worshipped nor of an immortality to be desired. And besides the difficulties accompanying all traditionalism, the believing sceptic is hampered by the further difficulty of proving that nothing can be proved. As for the peculiarly Anglican form of scepticism, the success of its most conspicuous professors has not been such as to encourage the use of so dangerous a weapon. Butler's 'Analogy' is considered to be largely responsible for the more complete unbelief which took the place of deism among the highest intellects after its publication; and Mansel's 'Limits of Religious Thought' contributed still more decisively to the spread of agnosticism during the latter part of the nineteenth century in England.

So obvious, indeed, is the weakness of scepticism as a

support to religion that in most instances it merely serves to prepare the way for another and more powerful method, for that last resource of struggling faith, the appeal to results. Our choice of a creed, it is urged, must be determined, like every other choice, by practical considerations. To prove the truth of religion no other argument is needed than the enormous benefits it has conferred on mankind. We owe to it civilisation, morality, art, and even the very science now impiously set in opposition to its claims. Impair its authority, and all the bonds of social union are relaxed. Destroy it, and society relapses into chaos. All religions have been relatively useful at the proper time and place. But that religion has the most authoritative claims on our belief which appears to have done the best service in the past and to promise the best service for the future.

For this, which I have called the method of appeal to results, there is no name in the English or any other language known to me, no single word answering to the three words traditionalism, mysticism, and scepticism, each of which sums up in itself a whole philosophy of faith. In these circumstances I propose with all diffidence to coin a new technical term; and Ophelism suggests itself to me as the most suitable that can be devised. It is formed from the Greek ὄφελος, 'use,' and therefore has etymologically the same force as Utilitarianism, a word that would have answered our purpose had it not been already appropriated as the denomination of a well-known ethical system, the system of those who hold that the ultimate end of action should be to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Ophelism, on the other hand, has to do with belief rather than with action, or with action only so far as it is determined by and justifies belief. But there is this much resemblance between the two, that ophelism, in at least one of its forms, measures the truth and falsehood of propositions by the same standard that utilitarianism applies to the value of actions, in other words, by the amount of pleasure or pain that their acceptance is calculated to produce. And the resemblance as well as the difference between the two systems seems not inappropriately indicated by the derivation of their respective names, the one from the great language of logic, the other from the great language of law.

Stated crudely, the pretensions of ophelism to measure truth

by utility are not precisely calculated to win the respect of clear-headed and honest people, and if applied to mathematical or physical science, would be apt to earn for its professors the reputation of being either fools or knaves. But an ophelist, of all men in the world, is least likely to commit himself to crude statements of a compromising nature; and to judge the canons of religious belief by the analogy of mathematical and physical science savours more of rationalism than of faith. The method is indeed Protean in its disguises, and cannot be rightly appreciated without a somewhat searching analysis of its applications, and a systematic presentation of their varieties.

Assuming that the admissibility of a belief should be measured by its adaptation to the wants of the human mind, and following the customary division of mind into intellect, will, and feeling, let us begin with the intellectual aspect of ophelism, its bearing on the relation between one belief and another as distinguished from the relation between belief and action or between belief and feeling.

Intellectual ophelism is the mental attitude of those who hold that certain propositions, otherwise quite unproved, must be accepted because their rejection might lead to the rejection of other propositions which it is very important that we should believe. An instance from the history of religious controversy will explain what is meant. At a time when the doctrine of Scriptural infallibility was entertained by a vast majority of Christians, to whatever denomination they belonged, Protestants were sometimes challenged to show cause for holding a dogma which their professed principle of private judgment forbade them to place under the aegis of ecclesiastical authority. For much in the Bible they had the mystical plea already considered, the appeal to their own consciousness of a divine voice speaking to them through the words of the sacred writer. But there were considerable portions of the canon, including at least one whole book—the Book of Esther—which, with the best will in the world, hardly lent themselves to such an interpretation, or could be distinguished by any internal marks of inspiration from ancient Jewish literature of admittedly human origin, such as Judith or Maccabees. There were besides texts irreconcilable with the acknowledged truths of science and history. To these 'difficulties,' as they were called, one general answer

was given: 'It all falls together.' To shake the authority of a single verse was to shake the authority of the whole Bible, and with the Bible the whole of religion would be overthrown. Now, this peculiar process of reasoning is an illustration of what I call intellectual ophelism. A particular proposition is upheld not because there is any direct evidence of its truth, or rather although there is direct evidence of the contrary, but because to believe it is useful in the interest of other propositions.[1] Apparently the controversialist believes that for those other propositions good evidence is forthcoming, since their truth is assumed as beyond question. If so, one might ask why the weightier truths are not left to stand on their own basis instead of being suspended over an abyss on such a precarious support. And the danger of the whole policy became evident when people took the apologists at their word, boldly accepting what they had been told was the extreme consequence of rejecting a single statement in the Biblical narrative.

In point of fact the infallibilists would have been sorely puzzled to prove any single article in their creed without the resource of an appeal to some passage taken at discretion in the Scriptures. But to seek for a deeper foundation would have exposed the logical weakness of their whole position. The inerrancy of the Biblical text was an article of the same tradition on whose authority they accepted as truths the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and indeed of all religion. And from that point of view it would certainly have been correct to say that all fell together. But to admit such an exclusive reliance on tradition would have been a dangerous concession to Roman Catholicism, which—again on principles of intellectual ophelism—was not to be tolerated for a moment, for otherwise there was no telling to what it might lead. Unfortunately, the same flexible method was equally at the service of their rivals, who might argue with as good a show of reason that the real danger

[1] 'Moses wrote the Pentateuch, we think, because if he didn't all our religious habits will have to be undone' (William James in 'Mind,' New Series, Vol. XIII., p. 471). I am not sure whether by 'religious habits' beliefs are meant. In any case the illustration seems rather unfortunate, as Moses did *not* write the Pentateuch, a fact of which one would expect the accomplished colleague of Professor Toy to be aware. Professor James is a master of humour, and may here be indulging in a little self-ironisation, but the context looks perfectly serious.

lay in not accepting Papal infallibility, a dogma of which the ophelistic origin is sufficiently obvious, although it is officially placed under the protection of a manufactured tradition.

Leaving intellectual ophelism to its inevitable dissolution in the hands of theological controversialists, the rationalist pierces through all these disguises and evasions of the real question at issue to find himself confronted by a second line of defence. Pushed to an extreme, this method exhibits a train of logical consequences in which each belief is held for the sake of another belief, and dogma after dogma is interpreted as the means to an end, until we reach the ultimate dogmas of God and immortality. It is possible, and I believe the attempt has been made, to treat the existence of God as a logical value, as itself the only evidence of all other truth. But as the argument, if pressed home, would cast considerable doubt on the reality of the books in which it figures—not to speak of their alleged authors—we may safely neglect it and pass on to what in any case would come after it. This is the argument from the ethical utility of religious belief, or what in our phraseology may be called the method of practical ophelism.

That morality would perish, or at least be seriously endangered unless we believed in God, with or without the adjunct of a future life, is an idea that seems to have originated with Plato, from whose philosophy it probably passed to Christianity. At any rate, there is not, to my knowledge, any trace of it in the Hebrew Scriptures. So far from inferring God's existence from the necessity of our being moral, the prophets of Israel inferred, contrariwise, that we ought to be good because there is a God who will punish us if we are not so, and reward us if we are.

Making religion subservient to practical ends, moral or otherwise, is indeed a symptom of decaying belief; and Plato himself is more than suspected of having privately thrown over the mythology that he publicly recommends to others. But be this as it may, the moral efficacy of a religion cannot, apart from mystical pretensions, be offered in evidence of its truth.[1]

[1] I refer to such phenomena as the 'conviction of sin,' which, to those who experience them, may count as direct evidence of supernatural influence. In their case faith is not ophelistic, but mystical.

It is implied that false beliefs cannot lead to right conduct. But this is a more than questionable assumption. Experience rather goes to prove the contrary. Patients are habitually deceived, to their great benefit, by their nurses and doctors; and nothing is more frequent than for good-tempered masters, in correcting the faults of their dependents, to affect an anger they do not feel, in the well-grounded persuasion that the efficacy of their reproofs will thereby be increased. In such cases the illusion exercises its beneficent influence notwithstanding the numerous instances where it has been exposed, simply because people as a rule believe what they are told. Why, then, should not alleged supernatural sanctions, whose unreality, assuming them to be unreal, is far more difficult of exposure, be credited with the same power? And assuming them to be real, how would their efficacy be thereby increased when verification in this life is impossible to any one but a mystic?[1]

There seems to be a general repugnance to admit that the universe can be run on lines of deceit. But one would like to know first of all what is meant by ascribing veracity to the universe. Assuming the providential government of the world —that is to say, assuming things to be ordered for the best by a Being of perfect goodness and wisdom—a case might be made out for the contention that such a Being would not permit his creatures to be lured by false promises into courses useless or injurious to themselves. In view of the disenchantment proverbially attending the satisfaction of desire, a rationalist would hardly grant so much without considerable reservations; and he might add that such an intimate acquaintance with the details of the divine administration as seems implied by the argument amounted to a revival of the mystical pretensions with which we have already parted company. But in truth the existence of a providential government is the very doctrine that the appeal to consequences has been used to establish; and to base the validity of such an appeal on the assumed existence of Providence is a vicious circle which may not unfairly be thrown into the following form: There is a God, because, if there were not, God would not permit the belief in his existence to be associated with virtuous conduct.

[1] By a curious irony, it is precisely among mystics that a morality dependent on hope and fear is most severely condemned.

A rationalist, it may be urged, should not deny that the universe is rational. Certainly not; but neither will he allow himself to be fobbed off with vague epigrammatic phrases. Rationality, when predicated of impersonal subjects, means no more than that they are consistent with themselves, that contradictory statements cannot truly be made about them. It is a moot-point among philosophers whether this self-consistency does or does not imply the constancy of natural law; that is, the principle that in the same circumstances the same antecedent is followed by the same consequent whatever may be the time or place of the occurrence. But whether it is a necessary truth in this sense or not, the constancy of natural law does not exclude the possibility of beneficent illusions.

Again the modern theological apologist sees his chance, and intervenes. 'This famous constancy of natural law,' he says, 'is itself, after all, an article of faith. No experience can prove it, for experience is of the past, not of the future. That the future will resemble the past is a practical postulate, accepted on no other evidence than that it works well. Yet the human mind entertains no firmer conviction; and we are content to rest our faith in God on the same basis. It works well; without it we could not act morally; in other words, we could not be ourselves.' It may be observed that in no case can the existence of God as a working postulate stand on the same level with the constancy of natural law; for the argument assumes that what has worked well in the past will continue to work well in the future; in other words, it assumes that the order of nature is constant, thereby admitting the higher generality of that principle as compared with the highest principle in theology. Thus, even if the rationalist stood committed to a general act of faith in assuming the constancy of nature, he might without inconsistency refuse to follow the theologian in going on to a second and more particular act of faith, not logically necessitated by the first. What Occam said of entities applies also to practical postulates. They ought not to be unnecessarily multiplied.

But in point of fact there is no such primary practical postulate as that which the apologist assumes. The constancy of nature is no mere working hypothesis, but a pure speculative generalisation, imposed on us by the phenomena, not imposed

on them by us, in spite of all the efforts made by ophelists to reverse the relation. The fallacy lies in their assumption that we have no experience of the future. It might plausibly be maintained that we have experience of nothing else. Ever since time began for us, future time has been turning itself into past time, and always with the same result, the result of proving that between them there is no difference except the difference of position, each portion of time exhibiting exactly the same properties as its predecessor, and no portion, as pure time, having the slightest power to alter its content, any more than the number of a collection of marbles is altered by altering the order in which they are arranged. All changes occur in time; but time itself is not a principle of change, and we are as sure of this as we are that time exists at all, that is to say we know it by reason, not by faith.[1]

If a rationalist could satisfy himself that right conduct, at least with the mass of mankind, depended on religious belief, he might, in the interest of morality, refrain from pointing out that religion is in whole or part untrue. And, no doubt, there have been many rationalists who have kept their disbelief a secret from all but a few intimate friends through dread of the mischief that might be done by its publication. But others have denied the assumed connexion between faith and conduct, contending either that men's speculative convictions have nothing to do with their behaviour one way or the other, or that the wilful suppression of truth must sooner or later exercise a deleterious influence on morality. And a third class, very numerously represented at the present day, while freely admitting the great services rendered by religion in former ages, and agreeing with the theologians about the necessary dependence of practice on theory, hold that it is high time to replace the discredited doctrines of religion by the more assured results of modern science. It must, however, be distinctly understood that such speculations, however interesting they may be, take

[1] This argument was suggested to me in conversation by an American friend, Mr. Leo Stein. However, I am not quite sure that he would be satisfied with my way of putting it. I mention this in order that, if he should ever state his views at length, which is otherwise much to be desired, the claim to priority may not be disputed. On the whole subject cf. Tyndall's reply to Mozley's Bampton Lectures ('Fragments of Science,' Vol. II., p. 8, *seqq.*)

us outside the field of rationalism properly so called, which is limited to the destructive cricitism of religious belief. The work of demolition may or may not have its use in preparing the ground for future construction; in an age of great intellectual activity it is certain to be carried forward regardless of consequences.

But the attitude of external criticism in reference to this issue is a point of comparatively small importance. The appeal to consequences as a test of truth is most effectually answered by the consequences themselves. We have seen how each principle of irrational belief, traditionalism, mysticism, and scepticism, has by logical development turned into the refutation of itself. And the same process of dialectical dissolution takes place also when religion seeks to base itself on practical utility, only by a more deadly because a more intrinsic necessity of decay. For a transcendental theology cannot be associated with a purely human morality without converting one or other, or in extreme cases both the one and the other, into the contradiction of itself. A few very simple considerations will show us how the process works out.

Let us first regard religious belief, or faith in an unseen immutable eternal self-conscious reality whence we come and whither we return, as the fixed standard to whose laws morality must conform. Logically carried out, this belief implies that our intensest world-interests are totally insignificant in comparison with the existence which awaits us after death, and which a few elect spirits can faintly realise even in this life by a continuous effort of meditation and abstraction. On the path to such perfection, domestic, social, and civic ties are rather hindrances than helps. And its divergence from the lines of progressive civilisation is wide. When looked at from the ascetic point of view, great organised efforts for the diffusion of culture, for the equalisation of wealth, for the mitigation of disease, for the prolongation of life, for the abolition of war, for the humanisation of penal law, for the protection of the helpless, can look for little encouragement on the side of religion. These things are trifling in comparison with the tremendous issues of eternity. Comprehensive schemes of reform seem designed to supersede the providence of God. They are a drain on energies that had better be spent on devotional exercises or on missions

to convert the adherents of other creeds. Besides, the pain, sickness, and death which it is proposed to diminish are not evils to the religious mind; on the contrary, they are often incentives to religion.

A more indirect but not less mischievous form of anti-social influence is set up by the tendency of mystics all over the world to promote celibacy and monasticism. I do not now refer to the frightful corruptions that have grown up under the shadow of those institutions, although such a reference would not be irrelevant in the present connexion. I refer to the loss inflicted on the community by the withdrawal of some of its best members into a sphere where the world benefits less than it otherwise would by their good qualities, and on posterity which loses even more by the fact that those qualities are not allowed to be transmitted to offspring.

Nor is it only with the loss of so much good that we have to reckon, but also with actual and positive evil. Mysticism leads, as we have seen, by its very nature, to the formation of religious communities, and every such community is a state within the state, exhibiting not seldom the character of a morbid growth, draining the body politic of nutriment, promoting interests adverse to the interests of the state, and sometimes conspiring with foreign enemies for its destruction. And this maleficent action on the environment is accompanied by a dangerous relaxation of discipline within. The private vices of wealthy members are looked at with an indulgent eye. Ability is more valued than honesty in the choice of those through whom dealings with the outer world are transacted; and dissensions with rival sects give occasion for the freest use of falsehood and calumny.

So much for morality. As for the original purpose for which the community exists, that is the cultivation of sustained relations with the spiritual world, it is apt to be put out of sight by the very machinery designed for its support. Familiarity with the details of a working organisation does not exactly supply the best training for entering into modes of experience where the ordinary laws of space, time, and causality are supposed to be in abeyance. It sometimes happens also that the abundant leisure and accumulated means of learning secured by conventual life give occasion to the most gifted members of the confraternity

for the free use of their reason on religious questions, resulting in a complete loss of belief.

So much for what happens when conduct is subordinated to faith. Turn we now to the opposite method, the subordination of faith to conduct. From this point of view—itself largely due to the advance of rationalism—human morality is assumed as something absolutely sacred, and nowise to be tampered with in the interests of ecclesiastical creeds and organisations, or neglected on the plea of an absorbing preoccupation with the vision of an invisible world. To this human morality supernatural religion is conceived as being related very much as the executive government in a state is related to its laws ; that is, as supplying them with a sanction. But while in secular society the nature of the sanction is perfectly unambiguous, there is more difficulty about understanding what it amounts to in the moral government of the world. Theologians of a former generation had no doubts on the subject. For them it meant an appropriate distribution, after death, of rewards and punishments unimaginable in their intensity and duration. Since then it has come to be more and more clearly understood that—quite apart from the incredible barbarism of this arrangement—none but the selfish and cowardly could be reached by such motives, that a morality based on hope and fear is no morality at all. At present the most fashionable view seems to be that this life should be interpreted as a preparation for the next. But it is open to more than one fatal objection. Most persons are made rather less than more fit for the things of the spirit by their experience of the world, and so far had better not have been born into it at all. Those who seem to have profited by mundane discipline would be the first to acknowledge that they owe their success to a happy combination of circumstances. It would therefore be gross favouritism if they were to enjoy a privileged position in the next world. And it is difficult, or rather impossible, to imagine how the experiences of the world as we know it can be an effective preparation for a world in which there is neither property, nor marriage, nor death. Some apologists have argued as if to deny immortality was to rob human life of all meaning and value. The charge might with better reason be retorted against their own belief.

In view of these difficulties some theologians have shown

a tendency to focus the light of religion on the duties and problems of our present state, leaving our future existence, if any, to take care of itself. They would look on God rather as helping everything that is high and striving against everything that is low in human nature, than as an avenger of what can no longer be undone. Assuredly the consciousness of receiving supernatural companionship and aid in the struggle towards a nobler life is a stimulant whose power cannot easily be overrated. But it would be easy to overrate the extent to which that consciousness is felt as an actual experience by the mass of religious believers. It is, in fact, the exclusive privilege of mystics; and the claims of mysticism have been dealt with already. With less imaginative moralists the effort to realise their conscience as an objective spirit soon becomes fatiguing, and is finally abandoned. Moreover, a person whose will depends for its fulfilment on the co-operation of his own creatures is apt to fade into an abstract law or a collective name for the totality of tendencies that make for righteousness. Purely humanistic ideals have an elective affinity for purely naturalistic metaphysics.

Another influence working in the same direction must not be overlooked. Truth and sincerity are virtues ranking as high in the scale of the ethical religionist as they rank low in the scale of the opposite school, the theological absolutists. But truth and sincerity are the deadly enemies of practical ophelism. Their ideals are best exemplified by the researches of modern science and modern scholarship where objective facts count for everything and subjective consequences for nothing. Hence those who have been brought up in the schools of ethical theology have frequently been observed to abandon the faith of their teachers with extraordinary facility.

'How, then, it may be asked, 'are we to explain the fact that faith, mystical or otherwise, is so often associated with right conduct, that the leaders of religious thought and the chiefs of established hierarchies are in many instances distinguished not only by the saintliness of their private lives, but also by their ardent participation in works of public beneficence? Do men gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles?' No, they do not; but vines and fig-trees may

grow in the same field with thorns and thistles. To ascertain the law of a particular tendency, we must study it in isolation, not under the complex conditions of modern society. To say that the eminent persons referred to have developed their enthusiasm of humanity in obedience to other influences than those by which they profess to be actuated, is to say no more than what they themselves habitually assert of opponents whose disinterested virtue they cannot deny. In either case the spirit of the age, acting on a naturally good disposition, may be offered as a satisfactory solution of the paradox. The real question is, how the spirit of the age came to be what it is, and why it contrasts so favourably with the ages of faith? But this is not all. The spirit of rivalry and competition has also to be taken into account. It is not the most admirable of motives, but it is often a powerful motive for good. The Churches, whose hold on the world is already sorely shaken, would lose what popularity they still retain did they not vie with secular agencies in promoting the material interests of mankind.

It appears, then, that the appeal to results which we call practical ophelism is doomed to failure, less from its logical irrelevance than because it merely serves to exhibit with startling clearness the essential incompatibility of the religious with the ethical ideal. What the conduct of religious believers may be said to prove is, that they have failed to realise the meaning of their creed, since, literally interpreted, it demands the sacrifice of the ends for which society exists—and this quite apart from the lamentably frequent cases where it is to their private or corporate interests that the sacrifice is made.

In truth, the argument from results owes far less to any evidence that can be quoted in its support than to its deep-seated connexion with the principle of authority to which analysis is perpetually bringing us back as the bedrock of religious faith. It has been shown how that principle implies the identification, quite natural to rudimentary thought, between belief and obedience. Now, so long as this confusion is permitted to continue, the rationalist will be treated as a rebel, that is to say, he will, if possible, be removed from the community by death, imprisonment, exile, or social ostracism.

When such means are no longer available, it will be insinuated that he has discarded religion as an inconvenient check on the indulgence of his vicious inclinations. When his respectability can no longer be questioned, it will be attributed to fear of the laws or of public opinion. When his disinterested virtue wins general recognition, and his society comes to be rather courted than avoided by the religious believers themselves, credit is given to early training, good example, and a certain diffused religiosity more easily assumed than defined. But all the imputations once lavished on his intellectual ancestors are now transferred with accumulated interest to his intellectual posterity, to an imaginary society of the future among whom faith, and therefore morality, shall have become extinct. Of their depravity the orgies of the Roman empire combined with the horrors of the French Revolution offer but a feeble forecast. The public, however, grow rather tired of waiting for the fulfilment of prophecies destined to be renewed as often as they fall due, and amuse themselves in the mean time by scrutinising with increased severity the not unimpeachable morals of the prophets themselves. At this juncture the impatience for immediate results leads from practical to emotional ophelism.

Frankly stated, this amounts to saying that a belief must be true if it gives a great deal of pleasure, or, what comes to the same thing, that the contradictory belief must be false if it gives a great deal of pain. Such an attitude is not unknown in the ordinary business of life; and one may even go the length of saying that many an important enterprise would never have been prosecuted to a successful issue had not its promoters been animated by a sanguine optimism far exceeding what was justified by a reasonable view of the facts. But in these instances hope has fulfilled itself by kindling a courage which would have been extinguished at the outset by a clear vision of the dangers to be risked and the difficulties to be overcome. And the cases are, perhaps, more numerous in which a sanguine temper, by encouraging a miscalculation of consequences, has led to failure and ruin. At any rate, it will be admitted that the power of our wishes over things in themselves cannot extend beyond the power of our will; that is, it can only affect the

future, and of the future only so much as is given us to control. Neither past events nor inaccessible realities can be changed by what we think about them or say about them, however much thought and expression themselves may come under the empire of emotion. All this is indeed part of the traditional wisdom of the nursery, where children are taught from their tenderest years that tears can neither put spilt milk back in the jug nor draw the moon down from heaven. But such homely lessons are considered wholly inapplicable to the sphere of faith. It seems to be assumed by our theological governesses, first, that God exists because we should feel very lonesome without him, and next, in tacit acknowledgment of the part played by fiction, that, having been invested with perfect wisdom by our idealising aspirations, his purposes can be indefinitely altered to suit our requirements. So also to most men death is dreadful, and life only lasts on the condition that it should be so regarded; yet for some forms of theology death must be an illusion, because it would be too dreadful that what countless experiences have made the strongest of certainties should be a reality after all.

In the world of observation and reasoning we are taught to look realities in the face; and on the whole, those are most respected who have learned the lesson best. But while it is the very principle of rationalism to extend the methods of observation and reasoning from the common things of life to all life and all existence, it is the principle of faith to draw a line of demarcation between those common things and the limiting facts of experience. Now, we have seen how, directly that line is drawn, self-contradiction begins on the side of faith. And of no anti-rational principle is this so true as of emotional ophelism, because nothing varies so much from one individual to another as the emotions excited by beliefs about the unseen, and nowhere is the adage more applicable that 'one man's meat is another man's poison.' The number of those is not few who declare, with every appearance of sincerity, that they have no wish for immortality, and if it were offered to them would reject it with horror. And among the sincere believers in that doctrine many have found their closing years overcast with gloom by reflecting on the tremendous possibilities of perdition. So appalling, indeed, to modern susceptibilities is the thought of that fate's overtaking any single soul—let alone the belief once confidently

and complacently entertained by many theologians that the number of the lost would vastly exceed the number of the saved—that an ever-increasing tendency to discard it is observable in the Protestant Churches. And assuredly, if our beliefs are to be determined by our wishes, Universalism ought to carry the day. But experience shows that Universalism is merely the transitional stage from the doctrine of the probable damnation of most men to the doctrine of the more than probable extinction of all. Nor is this more than what might have been expected from the known laws of human nature. For no creed could survive if it abolished that fear of death which, as I have said, is the very condition of life—fear for those under our care, if not fear for ourselves.

Some Stoical optimists profess to set little value on the hope of immortality, holding that whatever happens, being the will of God, must be for our good; and a recent Swiss theologian censures the earliest Christian Churches for not perceiving that death is God's best gift to man.[1] But is Theism itself a desirable doctrine? Not, of course, in the sense of being true, for emotional ophelism has nothing to do with unalterable realities, but in the sense of what we prefer to believe. Certainly the answer will not be an invariable affirmative on the part of the wisest and best of mankind. For there are some persons, more particularly sensitive women, not by any means pessimists but rather meliorists, whose feelings and consciences are so impressed by the miseries of the world that they shrink back appalled from the thought of making a personal being responsible for its creation and administration. If for them the substance of things hoped for identifies itself with the evidence of things not seen, it will be of things which are not seen only because they do not yet exist, but which will come into existence by a process of regular evolution from the things that are seen.

It might seem as if, with the form of emotional ophelism just considered, we had touched the bottom of unreason. But there is still a lower deep. Faith holds in reserve a last appeal to the power of self-delusion. And with the examination of this method our analysis will be fitly concluded.

For the mystic, nature is the living garment of God; for the

[1] Paul Wernle in 'Die Anfänge unserer Religion.'

moralist, he realises himself in the daily performance of duty; but for the mass of believers something is needed that appeals more vividly to sense and imagination, while involving a less severe strain on the intellect and will. And their wants are amply satisfied by the external forms of worship, grand edifices filled within and without with a wealth of plastic and pictorial decoration, solemn or stirring music, chanted prayers, soaring hymns, sweet incense, priests clad in rich vestments, unctuous pulpit orators holding numerous and well-dressed congregations spell-bound by their eloquence. Then, for an occasional excitement, they have street processions or pilgrimages; while, as a relief from the monotony of home-life or from exhausting social dissipation, for the more studious there is the perusal of devout literature—especially in a periodical form—and for the more personally minded, the conversation of saintly or, at any rate, amiable and dignified ecclesiastics; while all alike come under the vague diffused charm of august historic traditions and cities that perpetuate an immemorial name.

All this we call the aesthetic side of religion, the body and fair appearance of which religious beliefs are the soul and essence, the presence under whose pressure it seems intolerable that those beliefs should be impugned. And the religions which have the most effective command of this meretricious machinery use it freely not only for the retention of their own followers, but also for winning proselytes from other sects, with the result of driving their rivals to employ the same arts. Not many, perhaps, would acknowledge to others, or to themselves, that they have chosen their faith as they might choose a villa-residence, because it is pretty and picturesque;[1] nor would this method be so readily utilised as the others in the warfare against rationalism. Still, if not precisely pressed as an argument, the pleasure afforded by the decorative element in religion remains a potent factor in belief, and as such may find a place in our scheme under the name of aesthetic ophelism.

Yet nothing can be more opposed to the true spirit of religion than aestheticism, and nowhere is the dissolving dialectic of unreason more apparent. The mystic restorers of religion

[1] Since the above was written, I have found it very frankly acknowledged by a character, meant to be very estimable, in a novel called 'The Challoners,' by Mr. E. F. Benson, who, being an Archbishop's son, presumably has some insight into the methods of faith.

held its decorative adjuncts in abhorrence. Aesthetic emotion deals only with the surfaces of things; or rather, for it the surface is the thing, the curtain is the picture. On the subjective side it is an ideal activity, directed to no ulterior end, content with the pleasure of the moment, and sustained by a perpetual variation of excitements, none of which must go deep or be continued long lest the freshness of sensibility so necessary to pure enjoyment should be impaired. Now, of all tempers this calculated frivolity is most adverse to the seriousness of the mystic, this sensuousness to his spirituality, this superficiality and fickleness to his absorption in the eternal and unseen. Yet in the dialectic development of unreason these things have their place not less surely than his own ecstasies, of which, in truth, they are the necessary and ultimate outcome. Denounced as idolatry they tremble and vanish before the furious blast of his indignation, only to reappear sooner or later in the train of the new movement he has started, until another mystic rises up and resumes his tradition, repeating the same protest with the same result.

And so the process might go on for ever were not other and more revolutionary forces simultaneously brought into play. Religious aestheticism involves the necessity of continually declining on a lower range of interesting effects, simply because to win support it must operate on wider circles of the community. The decorative element is vulgarised by progressive adaptation to less educated tastes. As a first consequence, the more cultivated classes turn away with disgust from religious ceremonies—under which sermons and pietistic readings are understood to be included—and devote themselves to secular art and literature. At the same time the presentation of self-contradictory dogmas and incredible stories in plastic form provokes rationalistic criticism, just as practical ophelism, by claiming the most advanced morality as the fruit and verification of faith, serves to emphasise the contrast between modern ideals of righteousness and the immoralities inherited from barbarous modes of thought.

The loss of educated adherents might be borne with equanimity, especially in a democratic age, but for a further development in which all classes are interested, and the poorest perhaps most of all. To keep up and extend the external

apparatus of religion is a costly operation involving an unproductive expenditure of money to which no limits can be assigned. Money must then be procured in ever increasing amounts, and hierarchies all over the world have shown little scrupulousness or delicacy in the means employed for that pious purpose. Subsidies are drawn from the state at the risk of undermining its finances, and pious individuals are bullied or coaxed into benefactions from which their own families are the first sufferers. As centralisation increases, the most religious regions, which are often the poorest, are drained of their resources to adorn the metropolis with sumptuous places of worship.[1] And everywhere the support of the Church party is put up to auction, with the result of hampering the public services and sometimes of involving the country in ruinous wars.

The possession of wealth and power leads to corruption. Even if, under its temptations, the good did not become slothful and self-indulgent, in the case of a parasitic organisation—and all religious communities are by the law of their existence parasitic—they would tend to be crowded out of its more lucrative offices by intriguing and self-interested competitors. Not only the laity, but the lower ranks of the clergy are pillaged to support the higher in luxury and idleness, if not in actual vice; and a repulsive contrast is exhibited between the practice and the professions of those who chiefly represent religion, as well as between the splendour of religious ceremonies and the squalid misery of those by whose labour it is maintained. Meantime, the accumulated wealth of the priesthood excites the envy and cupidity of the more openly predatory classes, who finally take advantage of its unpopularity to pull down the whole fabric and to enrich themselves with its spoils.

In this way religions perish through the very agencies on which their hopes of perpetuity were based. For the fate that befalls them is not a mere loss of wealth, power, and consideration. As the beauty of their material expression had won credence for the doctrines it symbolised, so the hatred and loathing engendered by long experience of the abuses with which it is connected lead among the multitude to an equally unreasonable, but equally natural repudiation of their truth,

[1] What this leads to has been shown by the experience of Solomon, of Pericles, and of Leo X.

lead among the educated classes to a more candid examination of the rationalistic arguments in their disproof. Not that the opportuneness of rationalism has anything to do with the ideal value of its criticisms, which are no more strengthened by the evil consequences of religious belief, than they are logically discredited by its alleged beneficent influence on morals and art; but it has much to do with their success.

Our analysis of faith, as distinguished from and opposed to reason, is now complete. Apart from those enumerated, the motives that make for religious belief are identical in kind with those that make for any other kind of speculative belief, and are subject to the same canons of evidence. And it is only with beliefs upheld on such grounds that rationalism has to deal. Reasoning presupposes reason in those to whom it is addressed. But in order to clear the ground for its application it was first necessary to set out with the utmost possible distinctness and precision, those influences by which the mind is habitually perturbed in its search for information about the ultimate reality of things.

Such exactitude is alien to the habits of theological discussion, and perhaps not very favourable to the pretensions of theology. Modern theologians, no doubt, make a great show of logic, and sometimes refer with pride to their predecessors, the mediaeval schoolmen, as masters and models of the art. How far they are sincere in their professions may be ascertained, among other ways, by a comparison with the controversial methods of philosophers and men of science. The latter have their faults; they may suppress or distort facts, they may appeal to vulgar prejudices, they may impute bad motives to their opponents. But these are faults of particular individuals or of human nature in general, not of the class to which they belong; and to be found guilty of them is discreditable. With theologians they are habitual, and are neither censured nor apologised for. A high standard of truth and honour is no more expected of them than of the detective police. And that is because, like the police, they look on themselves as pitted against criminals who are not entitled to fair play. Their whole idea of honour seems to be to do the best they can for the side on which they are retained, with this difference, of course, from

the ordinary English lawyer, that they are always on the side of the crown. That they have chosen this side from rational conviction is hard to believe in view of the pleas by which they support it. Thus we are obliged to fall back on the supposition that their creed has really been determined by one or other of the four methods, or by two or more of them acting in combination.

Probably none of the four methods ever does act alone, at least among the more educated minds of the present day. The least complex of moderns is not likely to believe a dogma, that is to accept it with genuine conviction, merely because he has been told that it is true, or because it has been borne in on him by a supposed supernatural revelation, or because it seems as probable as anything else that can be stated on the subject, or because, if he denied it, he might be compelled to deny something else and never know where to stop, or because he might misconduct himself unless he believed it, or because the contrary belief is very shocking, or, finally, because it is associated with a number of agreeable recollections and anticipations. But all these motives are present together in a vague, voluminous, undifferentiated mass, in proportions varying with the idiosyncrasy of the believer, or they relieve each other in such rapid succession as to form a single enclosing circle of light.

Neither has it been meant to imply that the historical evolution of the four methods strictly corresponds to the order of dialectical development in which they are here set out. Such linear series are the most convenient for purposes of abstract exposition, but they do not represent the concrete life of the spirit. Still it would not, perhaps, be too much to say that the order here adopted corresponds fairly well with the order in which the lines of resistance are raised against the encroachments of reason on religious belief in the majority of minds that have experienced its conquering advance.

Nor, lastly, would it be true to say that traditionalism, mysticism, and the rest of them, are exclusively associated with the service of religion. On the contrary, my object throughout has been to emphasise the fact that these auxiliaries to faith are themselves essentially faithless, and when pressed home have a tendency to swing round to the opposite side. But although they may be found fighting for rationalistic conclusions, the

rationalist, as such, will not appeal to them for support. He will not say, for example, that this or that doctrine must be untrue because it has been rejected by a majority of the greatest intellects in modern Europe; although he may fairly urge such a consideration in rebutting an appeal to intellectual authority on the other side. And in forecasting the immediate or remote future of opinion, he may quote such a transference of authority as an element of prediction. To say, apart from all experience, that reason must conquer in the end, would be mysticism of the most irrational type. But it is perfectly legitimate to argue that among the unconscious forces by which human destiny is determined, some show a decided preponderance over the rest; and that these victorious forces ally themselves by preference with the rational side of human nature. And the spread of rationalism in modern society, supposing it to be admitted, might well be cited in verification of such an inference. At the same time it must not be imagined for a single moment that rationalists stake the truth of their contention on the event of its ultimate success or failure with the mass of mankind. Disagreeing as they do with the majority through all the past, they would remain unshaken by the foreknowledge, were such foreknowledge possible, that the disagreement would continue through all future time. For the date of an opinion about reality leaves reality itself unchanged; and the earth will go on moving even if another glacial period should throw back civilisation to a stage still lower than that of the authority by which Galileo was condemned.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN RATIONALISM AND CHRISTIANITY TO THE END OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Rationalism has been defined in the preceding chapter as the tendency to use reason for the destruction of religious belief. We know not when this destructive action began, when the reality of that supernatural world which religion professes to reveal was first denied; but we know that the denial is very ancient and wide-spread. It is even probable that, as some have conjectured, the progress from lower to higher forms of religion has been everywhere determined by something like rationalistic criticism. But this much is certain, that for us of the Western world it begins with ancient Greece. In the sixth century before our era the thinkers of Ionia had already convinced themselves that the world was an orderly whole owing its origin to natural causes, that is causes homogeneous with those by which ordinary changes in the weather are produced. And one of the first consequences of this conviction was the discovery that the religion in which they had been educated, that is the polytheistic mythology of Homer and Hesiod, was untrue. For the many imperfect and passionate gods of popular belief, varying in their characteristics with the physiognomy of their worshippers, they substituted a single deity in whom there was nothing human but his knowledge and that was without bounds. Some went so far as to deny the existence even of this attenuated abstraction, explaining the universe solely by the action of material forces; while others again sought to reform the old religion by clearing it of such absurdities and immoralities as were too obviously inconsistent with the ideals of contemporary culture.

Along with other elements of Greek civilisation Greek rationalism passed over to Rome, to be taken up with far more

enthusiasm, and propagated with far more freedom of utterance than public opinion in Greece, or at least in Athens, had permitted. For the religion of Rome, being a degraded fetichism kept under strict control, and used as an instrument of statecraft by her rulers, had never excited such emotions of reverence and affection as were associated with the worship of Zeus, Apollo, and Athene. But the serious and practical Roman genius could not rest content with mere negation. From the immense mass of material placed at his disposal by Greek philosophy Cicero singled out as best fitted for his countrymen the elements of what is still called Natural Religion, although nothing more unnatural, in the sense of remoteness from primitive conceptions, has ever been devised. There is one God worshipped under various names by all the nations of the world. Belief in his existence is innate in the human mind. He upholds the distinction between right and wrong, our knowledge of which is also innate, and punishes violations of the moral law either in this life or in another. After the explanations given in the preceding chapter, we can easily recognise in this apparently simple creed a highly complex and unstable combination of traditionalism, mysticism, and ethical ophelism. But it is also the first great result of rationalistic criticism systematically applied to religious belief, and long supplied a refuge from the oppression exercised on reason by more elaborate and exacting superstitions.

Meanwhile a people not less extraordinary, though far more limited in its endowment than the Greeks and Romans, had been cherishing with indestructible tenacity a religion which, more than any other, seemed to realise the dreams of an eclectic philosophy. The researches of modern scholarship have as yet thrown little light on the origin of Hebrew monotheism. There seems, however, to be a general agreement that it was a desert-faith, peculiar to certain nomadic tribes, and geographically associated with the Sinaitic peninsula; that the Beni-Israel carried this religion with them into the more fertile districts of Palestine, where their old faith became to some extent corrupted by contact with the idolatrous polytheism of its earlier inhabitants, great numbers of whom were incorporated with their own tribes; and that they were recalled to the purity of

their primitive creed by the vigorous preaching of prophets whose home was in the desert. Now it is a very remarkable circumstance that these monotheistic teachers assailed the superstitious worship of their apostate fellow-Semites in Canaan and Babylon with sarcasms substantially akin to the more measured satire directed by the Greek and Roman freethinkers against the anthropomorphic religion of their countrymen. Thus from a very early period the Jewish mind received a rationalistic impress never since lost, and perhaps connected with the unsettled habits of a nomadic race.

Nevertheless there is not, if I rightly remember, a single passage in the whole of Greek and Latin literature tending to show that the heathen rationalists were aware of any affinity between themselves and the Jews, while there are many passages referring to them as a peculiarly and notoriously superstitious race. Nor, in truth, were the two doctrines on their positive side of the same type. Imbued with the generous and humanitarian spirit of Hellas, Stoic monotheism conceived God as the common Father and legislator of all men. Hebrew monotheism conceived God as the old tribal Iahveh raised to supreme power, as a still mightier King of Babylon, choosing his ministers and favourites from his own people, burdening his courtiers with the performance of wearisome ceremonies, punishing ritual transgressions more severely than moral crimes, and identifying morality itself with obedience to his will. The study, not merely of the Law, but still more of the pedantic commentaries by which the Law had been fenced in, would leave the ablest Jews little leisure to absorb the liberal spirit of Hellenic literature and science, even if contact with heathen teachers had not been dreaded as a pollution ; while at the same time the study of sacred books, in which history was entirely rewritten and unscrupulously falsified in the interest of ritualistic Iahvism, left all Jews under the persuasion that the world existed only as a theatre for supernatural intervention continually exerted on behalf of themselves as a nation, or of the more devout among their number.

Yet so potent were the germs of a higher life among this marvellous people, that again and again they broke through the rough integuments of Judaism, seeking and finding communication with what was noblest in Hellenic thought. Philo's

attempt to allegorise the Pentateuch into a pictorial rendering of Platonising Stoicism, though abortive, was a sign of the times. So also was the more successful effort of the Essenes and Therapeutae to naturalise the Pythagorean discipline in Jewish communities. And many another movement, carrying in itself the promise and potency of a vast religious revolution, may have been cut short by some untoward accident without leaving the faintest trace of its short-lived existence in contemporary literature.

Such, indeed, would have been the fate of Christianity but for an extraordinary combination of circumstances. But in saving it from destruction those circumstances deflected the new growth very widely from its original direction. What began as a home-mission to the most destitute and degraded classes in Palestine, with the promise of a good time coming, when the poor were to inherit the earth, and the earth was to yield its fruits without laborious tillage, became, in the hands of some Hellenistic Jews, a crusade against the idolatry, vice, and selfishness of the heathen world, and ended in the substitution of a manufactured for a spontaneous mythology. The initiator of the whole movement had hated publicity, had studiously deprecated attention to his own personality, had hoped to be forgotten in the kingdom of heaven like salt in the dish, like leaven in the dough, like the seed in the tree. And he desired that the same self-effacement should be practised by his successors in the work of evangelisation. We know from the experience of modern India what happens in such cases. The English general who indignantly chastises his worshippers, is rewarded by a double measure of their adoration.[1] The Hindoo preacher of a purer faith is exalted to a niche in the Pantheon which he has tried to pull down.[2] Jesus was first identified with the expected founder of a restored Davidic dynasty, such as the old prophets had foretold, then with the idea of collective humanity, then with an emanation from the Supreme God, then with Almighty God himself.

But our business is not with the history of religion, or with the history of religion only in so far as it affects the history of

[1] This is what actually happened to John Nicholson.

[2] Lyall's 'Asiatic Studies,' Vol. I., pp. 62–64.

rationalism. And in this respect the influence of Christianity was immense. In the early stages of its missionary activity, converts might be won from the populace, as they are still won at revivalist meetings, by rather crude appeals to their emotions, and especially to their fears, by threats of the wrath to come. But with the educated classes, and above all with the philosophers, a different note had to be struck. Here the early apologists at once occupied the common ground of monotheism, reinforcing the rudimentary rationalism of the Jews with the developed rationalism of the Greeks. Polytheism, and pagan superstition in general, were assailed with weapons borrowed from Cicero, who himself had borrowed them from the New Academy. The Stoic argument for the existence of a beneficient Creator, derived from the evidences of design found in natural objects, combined with the alleged innate idea of a God possessed by all men, was accepted as valid. In this way natural religion, considered as independent of and introductory to revealed religion, became an integral part of Christian apologetics, as, indeed, it had already been recognised in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Even the supernatural elements of prophecy and miracle received a rationalistic colouring. These were diverted from their original mystic significance as intensified manifestations of an ever present, ever active divine energy, to the coldly diplomatic function of credentials bestowed by the divine monarch on his extraordinary envoys for a specific purpose and for a limited period.[1] Won by these arguments, or, possibly, by more ethical and emotional appeals, a certain number of philosophers and advocates joined the Church, bringing with them the traditions of the lecture-hall and the court of justice. Under their manipulation religious belief became elaborated into a scientific theology, where every article was defined and demonstrated with a show of extreme logical precision, and, in general, with as much reason as could be expected from writers who were almost completely ignorant of reality, and whose conclusions were dictated to them beforehand by interest or passion.

In progress of time force took the place of persuasion as an

[1] This transformation is already very obvious in the Fourth Gospel, and marks its Hellenic character.

instrument of conversion; and the few remaining philosophers were compelled, like other Roman citizens, to profess at least an outward conformity with what was now the state religion. But some of them continued to cherish in secret the traditions of Hellenic thought, and kept alive its protest against the triumphant Orientalism of the established creed; while such education as still existed could not help using as its chief instrument a literature on which the stamp of reason remained indelibly impressed.

But while the reason of the Greeks imprinted its character on their forms of literary expression, it had more than a merely literary existence. Ionian speculation had begun with enquiries into the origin and constitution of the physical world, carried on in connexion with the study of geometry and arithmetic. Out of these the special sciences were subsequently evolved by the usual process of differentiation. We are accustomed to think of the scientific spirit as something modern, as alien to the habits of Greek thought, as dependent on the inductive method which the Greeks ignored. But this, as all scholars are coming to admit, is a mistake. Aristotle knew all about induction, even over-valuing its importance; and the methods of exact observation and experiment were abundantly exemplified in the Alexandrian Museum. The ancient physicists were, indeed, too dependent on mere observation; they had not learned the method, created by Galileo, of getting behind phenomena by means of mathematical analysis. Greek science stagnated, retrograded, and perished through no fault of its professors, but through the general decline of civilisation consequent on the ever-increasing pressure of barbarism within and without the frontiers of the Roman Empire. To speak more definitely, there was a continual growth of militarism involving aggravated financial burdens by which the material resources of the community were dried up, and simultaneously with this a rank growth of superstition by which its intellectual energies were undermined. Hence knowledge of the future was sought for through the study of astrology, and command over nature through the employment of familiar spirits.

This retrograde movement of the pagan or Graeco-Roman mind in its last age deserves careful attention, for the attitude

of Christianity towards physical science was determined by it during the Middle Ages. From her first foundation the Church had conceived the forces arrayed against her, in imagery borrowed from Persian mythology, as a vast army of dark spirits headed by the great apostate angel Satan, the author of all physical and moral evil on this earth. Such diseases as madness, epilepsy, and hysteria were caused by the presence of his emissaries in the human body, and were cured by the superior authority of agents commissioned by the power of good. The gods of polytheism were so many devils, and their worship an unholy conspiracy with the power of evil. We cannot, then, wonder that the new religion should have looked askance on studies which unfortunately had become associated with the prevalent demonology, nor that an abiding ecclesiastical prejudice should have survived from a conflict where science figured under the garb of an infernal magic exercised to the injury both of God and man.[1] If reason can be spoken of at all in such a connexion, there was less of its light with those who encouraged the popular superstition than with those who tried, however mistakenly, to trample out its manifestations. And in the conflict with astrology reason was entirely on the side of those who, like St. Augustine, pointed out the delusiveness and absurdity of its pretensions.[2] With the great Hellenic revival of after ages the tradition of Ionian thought reverted to its original purity; and on the removal of accidental ambiguities the opposing forces gradually grouped themselves according to their intrinsic affinities, science with reason, and Christianity with faith. But the inevitable conflict has been exasperated on the one side by a suspicion whose justification has been forgotten, and on the other by the memory of persecutions not wholly inexcusable under the conditions of mediaeval thought.

Conflicts, latent or overt, with the unreconciled inheritors of classical antiquity were not the only intellectual danger that Christianity had to face. In some respects Judaism offered a more formidable opposition to its claims. The mere existence

[1] In Cardinal Newman's 'Callista' Gurta the witch seems to symbolise physical science, while her son Juba stands for the spirit of modern liberalism.

[2] 'Confessiones,' IV., iii., 5.

of such a parent, surviving in indestructible vitality by the side of the daughter-religion, amounted to a continual and very provoking criticism on the pretensions of the Church. Authority, to command assent, must be ancient and undisputed. She might thank the Jews for it if hers was neither the one nor the other. Her advocates, indeed, talked of traditions going back to the creation of the world; but the claim was based on documents whose hereditary guardians utterly denied the legitimacy of the Christian interpretation. On their view such doctrines as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Virgin-birth, and the Atonement were utterly irreconcilable with the letter and spirit of the Hebrew Scriptures, being in fact an adulteration of pure monotheism with elements borrowed from heathen superstition. True, the prophets of Israel had foretold the coming of a Messiah, an anointed King of Davidic descent who was to redeem his people from their oppressors. But not a single incident in the career of Jesus answered to these predictions, least of all his death on the cross, a point on which modern scholars are now agreed. The destruction of their holy city was quoted against the Jews, as if it were a punishment for their hard-hearted unbelief. But it was really brought about by their faithful protest against Roman idolatry, a protest still steadfastly maintained against the more equivocal idolatry of that reformed Rome where the high pontiff of a new Paganism had set up his throne, in direct defiance of the Decalogue, over the worshipped bodies of dead men.

The popes, bishops, and kings of the early Middle Ages did themselves great honour by their toleration of a people whose opinion of Christianity was so unfavourable, and who took advantage of the freedom and security they enjoyed to express that opinion in no sparing language.[1] After the first Crusade this toleration was more or less withdrawn in deference to popular fanaticism associated with vindictive cupidity. But meanwhile the cause of monotheistic Puritanism had passed into the keeping of another Semitic people, whose horses' necks were clothed with the thunder of Sinai, and whose fierce

[1] Under Louis the Pious, the Jews 'could fearlessly give their candid opinion about Christianity, the miracles of the saints, the relics, and image-worship' (Graetz, 'History of the Jews,' Vol. III., p. 166, Engl. Transl.).

denunciation of 'those who give God partners' was carried home by the incisive rhetoric of Damascus and Toledo. We are apt to think of the great Mohammedan invasions as an offensive return of Asiatic barbarism, a southern pendant to the devastating descents of the Scandinavian pirates on north-western Europe. And so to a considerable extent they were. But for the doctors of the Church, Islam, when once rightly understood, meant very much more. It meant not only a force to be confronted by a crusading chivalry in the field, but also an array of philosophical principles, 'terrible as an army with banners,' to be met by counter-demonstrations in the study and the lecture-room. St. Louis observed that when a layman hears the Trinity denied, he should not reason with the infidel, but straightway run him through the body. Nevertheless, the pious monarch would have probably approved of the more peaceful means employed by St. Francis of Assisi to convert the Soldan; and we know how he at once commissioned three secretaries to take down the 'unanswerable argument,' which suddenly flashed across the mind of St. Thomas Aquinas at the royal dinner-table. Thus by a process already analysed the conflict of religious authorities resulted in the submission of the disputed questions to the arbitrament of reason. Nor at the very zenith of the so-called ages of faith were there wanting sceptics to declare without disguise that all three disputants, Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans, were equally mistaken.

Reason at this time meant the philosophy of Aristotle. Geographical and historical circumstances had brought the Arabians into contact with Greek scholarship some centuries earlier than the theologians of Western Europe; and the Peripatetic system fell more easily into agreement with their own simple monotheism than with the complex subtleties of Catholic dogma. But the precocious application of reason to faith led to unexpected developments on both lines. In the schools of Bagdad and Cordova philosophy tended to become monism, and religion to evaporate into a mystical pantheism. Greek thought had always been approaching this consummation, but had never reached it, held back by the characteristic leaning of the Greek genius towards distinction, balance, and limitation. Formed under Roman influence, Neo-Platonism had nearly broken loose from these

fetters when the revived study of Aristotle came to rivet them more tightly than ever. And the new religions by which Hellenism was temporarily stifled proved in one way even more unfavourable to pantheism through their common insistence on human immortality, with all the tremendous practical interests that it involves. But the doctrine of divine omnipotence worked in an opposite sense. Seeming to be the literal apotheosis of personality, it ultimately annuls personality, for an infinite and absolute being cannot be conceived as self-conscious. To say there is no God but God comes very near to saying there is nothing but God; God, the world, and the human soul are not three, but one.

Some of the Arabian commentators on Aristotle actually took this step, reading their own theory into the text they professed to interpret. From their pages it passed through the mediation of Jewish translators into the schools of Christendom, where it met and mingled with an almost identical vein of speculation derived from Neo-Platonism under the influence of Christian mysticism. The earliest and most important of Western mediaeval pantheists was John Scotus Erigena.[1] That great thinker flourished in the ninth century, but his teaching did not bear full fruit until it was revived at the end of the twelfth century by David of Dinan and Amaury.[2] A papal decree compelled Amaury to retract; but the school which he represented had struck deep root, and soon reappeared under other forms. Above all, the Arabian philosophy generally associated with the great name of Averroes excited widespread attention, and won a ready entrance into the higher circles of mediaeval society, recommended as it was by the authority of Aristotle and of his most renowned interpreter. Even the Franciscan Order is said to have come under Averroist influence.[3] But the official exponents of scholastic Catholicism, with Aquinas at their head, showed without difficulty that the infidel commentators had misrepresented Aristotle's meaning; and popular art has depicted Averroes, together with sundry other heresiarchs,

[1] 'Restat sine ulla controversia, unum Deum omnia in omnibus esse fateri ('De Div. Nat.,' Lib. iii., cap. 17, p. 675, B. Migne).

[2] Haurćau, 'Histoire de la Philosophie Scolastique,' Vol. II., 1, Chapp. 4 and 5.

[3] Renan, 'Averroès,' p. 269.

lying prostrate under the feet of the Angelic Doctor on the frescoed wall of a Florentine chapel.

When the thirteenth century drew to its close the intellectual struggle between rival religious authorities seemed to have ceased, leaving Catholicism in possession of the field. The Jews were dispersed and ruined. The Moors were driven into a corner of Spain, and their schools of philosophy had long since expired under the fatal pressure of popular fanaticism. In the East Mohammedanism had become thoroughly rebarbarised by falling under Turkish control. Secure in the possession of its classic inheritance, Europe had nothing more to learn from the infidels nor the Church to fear from their doctors, whatever dangers their invading hordes might still hold in reserve. Nevertheless, the total result of scholasticism was to weaken traditional belief. It had set up Aristotle as the great master of all knowledge, and thereby forced attention on his discordance with orthodox theology. After all, it mattered practically nothing whether he was a pantheist or not, when his philosophy excluded everything in Christianity but its theism, and in theism everything but the personality of God. More particularly it excluded human immortality, the only religious doctrine to which, with its implications, any one in Europe except a few mystics attached any importance whatever. Had the schoolmen agreed among themselves, their authority might have counted for much; but their conclusions remained hopelessly at variance, nor was there any objective standard of reference to which they could appeal for verification, any such test, for instance, as the comparison of calculated results with observation in modern science.

If mediaeval faith found no lasting support in speculation, still less did it find a support in practice. The modern religious system of verification by conduct—what I have called ethical ophelism—was not one whose application was desirable in those times; for from Abélard to Dante[1] all the great writers of the Middle Ages are agreed in considering the morality of

[1] Abélard, 'Opera,' ed. Cousin, Vol. II., p. 409; John of Salisbury, 'Polycraticus,' III., ix., p. 493[b], Migne; Aquinas (?) 'De Regimine Principum,' III., 9; Roger Bacon, 'Compendium Theol.,' ed. Brewer, pp. 398 *sq.*; Dante, 'Inferno,' xxvi., 118 *sq.*; 'Convitto,' IV., v.

Greece and Rome as unquestionably superior to that of their own contemporaries. Enthusiasm for classical antiquity was indeed the inevitable outcome of the whole philosophic movement. Nor was it awakened only by the moral superiority of the heathens. Quite apart from this, they held the keys of that natural religion which had come to be recognised as the indispensable basis of Christianity, and he who sought to master it must begin by sitting at their feet.

But another and a newer interest was becoming associated with the study of Greek. At an early period in the history of Islam the attention of enlightened Orientals had been attracted by the mathematical, astronomical, geographical, and medical treatises composed in the great scientific schools of antiquity. Through the medium of Arabic and Latin translations these had found their way, together with Aristotle's writings, into the West, and had excited the liveliest curiosity to know more about a language and literature in which such treasures were preserved. To this curiosity our own Roger Bacon gave the most ardent and comprehensive expression. We habitually think of this ill-fated friar as a marvellous anachronism, as one who, in the second half of the thirteenth century, anticipated his own namesake, or, better still, anticipated Galileo by three hundred years—nay, almost looked forward to the mechanical triumphs of modern times. There was, perhaps, a touch of practical materialism about the Franciscan, as there was more than a touch of it about Lord Chancellor Bacon. But his true historical importance is not to be found in prophetic descriptions of the motor-car. It is to be found rather in his retrospective attitude, in the worship of classical antiquity shared by him with his noblest contemporaries. He was a harbinger of the real and redeeming Renaissance, the recovery not of the Greek beauty that ministered to voluptuousness, but of the Greek philosophy that ministered to truth and virtue.

The actual Renaissance was a far more complicated movement than anything that could be dreamed of in a monastic cell. It was less a single stream of tendency than a vast whirlpool where many opposing or intersecting currents met together, leaving the course of modern history to emerge at last

victorious from their tortuous eddies. Among these contributory forces one of the most important, but also one of the least calculable in its results, was mysticism. The conflict of authorities disclosed by Scholasticism set free a large amount of mystical aspiration. As it had not pleased God that the world should be saved by dialectic, personal devotion remained to be tried; and it was tried, with the usual anarchic results, appearing in one country as brooding pantheism, in another as the patient unresisting endurance of martyrdom for conscience' sake, in a third as organised and aggressive heresy, in a fourth as scholarly Platonism.

Plato, indeed, as represented on his more theological side, and as interpreted by Plotinus, was the master-thinker of the whole age, and of all ancient writers the most eagerly sought after by its students. If Greek exiles flying before the Turkish invaders had not come to Italy with his Dialogues in their hand, Italians would certainly have brought them from Constantinople, as Aristotle's treatises had been brought by the French crusaders to Paris two hundred and fifty years before.[1] Men and women long sought in the Phaedo for a rational assurance of that immortality which had been denied to them by the Peripatetic philosophy, or associated with degrading superstitions in the popular mythology. Still, by strengthening the very fulcrum of ecclesiastical authority, Platonism might so far seem to count as an element that made for reaction. But the real importance of the new teaching lay rather in its power to deliver men's intellects from the Aristotelian yoke, to promote the study of mathematics, to prepare the way for Copernicus and Galileo.

Philosophical dissensions may have played their part in the general break-up of the mediaeval organisation, but they are not solely responsible for it; and perhaps most of the anarchy and confusion so strongly characteristic of this period is traceable to purely material causes. During the two centuries that elapsed between the last crusade and the first great maritime enterprises of Portugal and Spain, questions of disputed succession and allegiance were agitated to an extent previously

[1] Jourdain, 'Recherches critiques sur les Traductions d'Aristote,' pp. 8 and 10.

unknown. Others besides the Bezonian had to answer the question, under which king? at the peril of their lives. Beginning at the two opposite extremities of Europe, in Naples and Scotland, the struggle for thrones spread like a pestilence over the length and breadth of Catholic Christendom, successively involving France, Spain, England, and Italy in devastating wars. In Germany dynastic dissensions had become permanent; nor was the tenure of crowns ever secure for many years together in the outlying Slavonic and Scandinavian kingdoms. Provinces and cities threw off the yoke of their ancient rulers; and the discontent of the plundered productive classes found expression in sanguinary insurrections. This loosening of traditional bonds opened a wide field for individual enterprise not only among the members of reigning houses, but through all classes of society. An exiled Florentine layman maps out the unseen world, seats himself on the throne of judgment, and distributes sentences of perdition and salvation at his own discretion. A visionary Sienese nun restores the Papacy to Rome. A visionary peasant girl restores France to her legitimate monarch. An English noble makes and unmakes kings. A Genoese sailor gives a new world to Castile. A Dominican friar holds for years the supremacy of Florence by the sole use of spiritual weapons.[1]

The production of great and powerful personalities went on during the succeeding centuries, and has indeed been continued, although on a less colossal scale, down to our own times. But it has tended to display itself more and more exclusively under the form of artistic genius, with a marked decrease of magnitude even there, while contributing more rarely to the consolidation of national states. That work of consolidation was formerly its chief function, and is also a most characteristic phenomenon of the Renaissance, with important bearings on the history of rationalism. The study of classical antiquity powerfully co-operated with the spontaneous working of natural causes, with the ambition of the few to extend their dominion and the

[1] The great and commanding personalities of the Middle Ages properly so called, from Charlemagne to Edward I. of England, would not, I think, have exercised any appreciable influence apart from the high official position to which they were raised by birth or election. The only exception I can think of is St. Bernard; and as Abbot of Clairvaux he held an official position of considerable dignity.

craving of the many for protection from violence and fraud, whether practised by predatory laymen or by predatory priests, to popularise the ideal of a strong national government. The city-states of Greece and Rome had set an example, recorded in two glorious literatures, of political organisations informed by a spirit of heroic patriotism, and worked for the common good on purely secular lines. Such at least was the dream of thinkers like Machiavelli; and the quickening power of the dream did not depend on its strict historical accuracy. In one point at least they were right. The classic state was supreme in matters of religion, and never tolerated the dictation of native or foreign hierarchs. It was now proposed that the civil power in the modern state should exercise a similar jurisdiction over the public worship of its subjects, and over the religious teaching to which that worship gave expression. Opinion was still made subject to authority; but the seat of authority was changed from a spiritual to a secular power.

Modern Liberalism energetically repudiates the State's claim to interfere with what has been rather infelicitously called freedom of conscience; and modern Catholicism has not been slow to utilise a popular cry, with which, however, it associates a meaning widely different from the liberal interpretation of freedom. The reciprocity is to be all on one side. Everybody is to tolerate the Church, and the Church is to tolerate nobody. The State is to protect Roman teaching in religion and morals against inconvenient criticism, but not to enforce any dogmas of its own. A long name, Caesaropapism, has been coined to stigmatise such a competing claim where it is still put forward.

On the abstract question a rationalist will side with neither party. In his opinion force is no remedy against error. Experience shows that in scientific enquiries truth results from the freest and fullest exercise of criticism. Even in mathematics the right of private judgment must be admitted; and the most old-fashioned geometrician would laugh at the absurdity of limiting space to three dimensions by legal enactment. But as between two illegitimate exercises of power, it is quite possible and quite consistent for rationalists to prefer the authority of the State to the authority of an international Church. Political magistrates are not as a rule a set of fanatics, caring only to force

their private opinions down the throats of an unwilling people. To govern at all they must have a considerable following; and their interests are more likely to be identified with those of their countrymen than are the interests of a spiritual power having its seat in a foreign city and chiefly recruited from an alien race.

Such considerations always count for much; they were of overwhelming weight in securing the support of public opinion for the machinery by which the Reformation was carried through. The statesmen of the sixteenth century had to protect the nations under their charge against the exactions of a shameless and licentious Italian priesthood, and the royal succession against the interference of a pontiff whose decisions might be dictated by his own political interests as a temporal sovereign. For this purpose it was necessary that they should forcibly suppress just as many dogmas—dogmas, be it remembered, formerly imposed by the same force—as favoured those intolerable pretensions. A century before Luther, Bishop Pecok had upheld his Church's teaching against the Lollards on the ground of its utility.[1] It now appeared how little that argument was worth. The doctrine of Purgatory could hardly be recommended as a means of moral discipline when it had become not merely the great instrument of rapine, but of rapine used for the support of unspeakable vice.

Whatever may be thought about the claims of authority in matters of opinion, it would be worse than useless to ignore the decisive part played by it in the ultimate determination of religious belief. The present division of Western Europe between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism is not due to any racial characteristics of the peoples professing their respective creeds. The key must rather be sought in their political geography. While the Roman empire of the West retained its earlier organisation, conversions to Christianity were effected by private enterprise or by the natural spread of example. But with the victory of the Barbarians and the assumption of a predominant position by the Roman See a different system came into play. Missionaries were regularly dispatched from headquarters with a commission from the Pope as the official head of Christendom to bring the heathen under

[1] For Pecok's opinions, which are not in the true sense rationalistic, see Thorold Rogers, 'Six Centuries of Work and Wages,' p. 378.

his spiritual dominion; for this purpose they addressed themselves in the first instance to the temporal rulers of the still unconverted Teutons; and when these had been won over, their authority was freely used to impose baptism on their willing or unwilling subjects. Thus it came to pass that throughout Northern Europe temporal sovereigns found themselves invested with a sort of spiritual power unknown to the princes of the Latin states; while at the same time the greater barbarism, and perhaps the greater seriousness of the Teutons, rendered them an easier prey to Roman greed and imposture until the awakening of the Renaissance brought about an overwhelming popular reaction.

But the Reformation involved much more than a revolt against priestly exactions followed by a transference of authority in matters of religious belief from the Church to the State. It stood for a great religious revival, in which the sporadic mystical movements of the two preceding centuries were clarified, systematised, and united under a common standard. That standard was the Bible. Here we see the spirit of the New Learning manifestly at work. As the classics of profane philosophy and literature were drawn out of their hiding places, cleansed from the dust of ages, retranslated and made universally accessible by the printing press, so also were the classics of sacred literature and sacred philosophy republished to Europe, but with a wider diffusion and a more rousing appeal. Nor let it be forgotten as vitally characteristic of the movement that what German scholarship gave back to mankind was the whole Bible—not merely the New Testament, but the Old. Reformers might talk, and not without reason, of gospel-truth, of a return to the purity of early Christianity. But so far they were adding nothing to what had been tried over and over again in the Middle Ages, within the Church by St. Francis of Assisi, without the Church by Waldensians, Lollards, and others, and never tried with permanent success. For a return to the early Christian ideal really meant asceticism, communism, blind reliance on supernatural assistance against the powers of darkness, that is, against the world.[1] Such an ideal could not co-exist with the conditions even of mediaeval

[1] See Ritschl, 'Geschichte des Pietismus,' Vol. I., i., 2.

civilisation, and therefore its devotees were either shut up in convents or rooted out with fire and sword. Now, the lessons of the Old Testament, the stern practical realism of Hebrew religion, were just what was wanted to correct the extravagances of mediaeval heresy, to replace the ascetic ideal of righteousness, to rehabilitate the arm of the flesh, and to use it for the suppression of idolatrous polytheism. That union of Church and State which the Hellenist associated with the memories of his beloved republics the Hebraist saw realised under a holier commission at Shiloh and Jerusalem; and the great Puritan poet represented both traditions when he spoke in chanted prose of weapons forged in the shop of war by armed justice in defence of beleaguered truth.

Finally, all these impulses were gathered up and welded together by the rich and powerful personality of one in whom the unrestrained individualism of centuries reached its climax and its most consummate fruit. Nor did the fertility of that tremendous upheaval exhaust itself in Luther. To carry the Reformation through, and to secure its conquests against the subsequent reaction, nothing less was needed than the array of heroes who seconded him—Zwingli, Calvin, John Knox, Elizabeth, William the Silent, Gustavus, Cromwell, and last of all, but not inferior to any of these in nobility, William the Deliverer.

That the Reformation was not directly favourable to liberty of thought has become a commonplace; but that it was on the whole, as so many now hold, an event to be regretted by rationalists and friends of enlightenment generally cannot be admitted. Indeed, the very mistake of describing Protestantism as a revolt of reason against superstition, or of private judgment against authority, is highly suggestive. Such a misconception would never have arisen had not reason and freedom been somehow related as antecedents or consequents, or both the one and the other, to the religious movement represented by Luther. We are told that the historical connexion is only apparent, that the emancipating process was begun and completed by the Renaissance, would indeed have been completed much sooner had not a recrudescence of fanaticism provoked by the theological controversy come to interrupt its normal evolution. But is it so certain that the Renaissance would

have been tolerated much longer had the Reformation not intervened? There are reasons for believing the contrary. A very similar movement in the Mohammedan world had been arrested by popular fanaticism centuries before.[1] Centuries afterwards English rationalism succumbed before a like reaction, and was only resuscitated by the importation of Scottish and Continental thought. The Church's attitude toward physical science was traditionally hostile; and under the manipulation of Aquinas her creed had become interwoven with the false astronomy of Aristotle, whose authority, at any rate, the Reformers helped to overthrow.

What may fairly be said is that various Protestant Churches have frequently displayed a spirit of ferocious intolerance which would have done them more discredit than is their actual due had it been less consistent with their original principles. But in point of fact the Reformers did not take their stand on the right of free opinion. What they objected to, as Froude has well observed, was not persecution as such, but persecution of the truth. At the same time the commonplace taunt that they merely substituted one infallible authority for another is hardly justified. Their belief in Scriptural infallibility was fully shared by their opponents; and the Roman Church now stands far more deeply committed to that doctrine than any important Protestant community.[2] Even early in the seventeenth century, when the Copernican system had won general acceptance in Northern Europe,[3] it was condemned by Rome ostensibly on account of its inconsistency with the letter of Scripture, although the real reason was more probably its incompatibility with Aristotelian scholasticism. Nor is the position altered by the fact—if it be a fact—that the Higher Criticism first arose in Roman Catholic circles. A more significant circumstance is that on that occasion it was promptly suppressed by the Roman Catholic authorities.[4]

[1] Renan, 'Averroès,' pp. 29–36.

[2] See Cardinal Manning on the Inspiration of Scripture in 'Essays on Religion and Literature,' Second Series, pp. 348–385.

[3] In his ironical address to 'the discreet reader,' Galileo affects to have undertaken his exposition of the Copernican system to show that the Italians are not so ignorant of astronomy as their critics beyond the Alps imagine ('Dialoghi sui Massimi Sistemi,' p. 3).

[4] There is a picturesque account of the way in which Bossuet suppressed

All this, however, merely amounts to claiming that the bonds imposed by the Reformed Churches were more easily broken or slipped through than the bonds imposed by Rome; nor is it intended to claim any more. Rationalism alone has established freedom of utterance about religion among us—freedom of thought has always existed for free souls—and the pretension of modern orthodox Protestants to have introduced toleration is as ridiculous as their taunting references to the persecuting spirit of Catholicism are unjust and odious. That they profess to represent primitive Christianity, and that primitive Christianity virtually condemned persecution, proves nothing. For in the first place Rome vindicates the same representative position for herself, and in the next place, to be consistent, they should condemn the use of force for any purpose whatever, which, with the honourable exception of the Quakers, they would be very sorry to do.

Opportunism is in truth the common guide of both parties in matters of religious toleration. Two instances may be quoted in illustration of what is meant. A certain Friar Forest was burned alive in May, 1538, for the 'heresy' of asserting that the Pope was head of the Church. On that occasion Latimer consented to preach a sermon, the object of which was to induce the victim to recant his convictions.[1] Seventeen years later, on the day after Hooper's martyrdom, Philip of Spain, whose name was to become inseparably associated with *autos da fe*, put up his confessor to preach a sermon denouncing the execution as contrary to the true spirit of Christianity; the King's object at that time being to make himself popular among Englishmen, and to avoid all responsibility for the cruelties of his sanguinary consort.[2] These are extreme and isolated instances of self-protective mimicry in the predatory traditionalist. No Papist has, I believe, been again burned for heresy in England; and the courtly confessor was presumably not invited to repeat his sermon at Madrid. The perfect realisation of a type is necessarily a rare occurrence. But one such case is of inestimable value for the light it

Richard Simon's 'Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament' in Renan's Preface to the French translation of Kuenen (1866).

[1] Froude's 'History of England,' Vol. V., p. 497 (Cabinet ed.).

[2] Strype's 'Memorials,' Vol. III., p. 209, quoted by Prescott, 'Philip the Second,' Vol. I., p. 105.

throws on the imperfectly developed specimens of common experience. And here in these two episodes of religious history we have the double aspect of the gospel of unreason brought out with an ingenuousness of self-revelation that is unique. There is no violence that pious fanaticism will not practice to enforce conformity. There is no gentleness it will not simulate to disarm suspicion.

What the Reformation did for intellectual freedom, and therefore eventually for rationalism, was to overcome traditionalism as an element of religious belief by setting the principle of authority at variance with itself. In Germany and England the national state was opposed to the Church. In other countries Presbyterianism was opposed to Episcopacy. The result was a state of things somewhat resembling the great religious conflicts of the Middle Ages, but with a tension more violent in proportion to the more restricted arena and the more intimate relations between the warring creeds. Again reason was invoked by all parties, again a common ground of argument was sought, and again litigation redounded to the profit of the arbiter to whom all appealed.

But the first effect of the collision was to generate an amount of heat most unfavourable to the growth of rationalism. Erasmus and More furnish striking examples of the reaction brought about in sensitive minds by the panic-dread of revolution. How far Erasmus had gone in the direction of unbelief is not known; but it would hardly be uncharitable to conjecture that his intellectual sympathies were with Cicero rather than with St. Paul. But after Luther's outbreak his submission to ecclesiastical authority would, in its grotesque abjectness, have won a smile from his own goddess of Folly. With Sir Thomas More there is less room for doubt, and the revulsion of sentiment is not ridiculous, but tragic. After laying down the most admirable principles of religious toleration in his ideal commonwealth, he became one of the cruellest persecutors of a cruel age; and, what was worse, the heretics whom he sent to the stake were much less heretical than their judge. The author of the 'Utopia' was, in fact, an agnostic. Among the inhabitants of that ideal community 'there be,' he tells us, 'that give worship to a man that was once of excellent virtue or of famous glory,

not only as God, but also as the chiefest and highest God. But the most and the wisest part, rejecting all these, believe that there is a certain godly power unknown, far above the capacity and reach of man's wit, dispersed throughout all the world, not in bigness, but in virtue and power. Him they call the Father of all. To Him alone they attribute the beginnings, the increasings, the proceedings, the changes and the ends of all things. Neither give they divine honours to any other than him.' 'So far,' observes Jowett, after quoting this passage, 'was More from sharing the popular religious beliefs of his time.'[1] And so mistaken, we may add, was Macaulay in resting the permanent credibility of transubstantiation on the faith of such a believer. The point is one on which Jowett is not likely to have been deceived, for, apart from his general ability as an interpreter of other men's thoughts, his own official position had accustomed him to combine the same profession of orthodoxy with the same scarcely veiled unbelief.

The Reformation was followed in hardly more than a quarter of a century by the publication of the Copernican system. The bearing of that great discovery on Christian theology has been variously estimated. To some it involves the complete overthrow of revealed religion. To others it is just as reconcilable with orthodoxy as is the Ptolemaic astronomy. In discussing the issue we must guard against a confusion between psychology and logic. It is quite possible for two beliefs to be simultaneously held by the great majority of educated persons which, in the judgment of the most careful thinkers, are mutually exclusive. It is not, therefore, enough to say that during some centuries vast numbers of people, otherwise competent to form an opinion, have accepted the Copernican system, and have yet remained Christians. At most a slight presumption that the two beliefs are not incompatible may be admitted. And it may fairly be contended that a religion which has remained so long practically unshaken by the revolution in astronomy is not likely to be disturbed by it in the centuries to come. At the same time it should be borne in mind that a consideration which, taken alone, has little effect, when combined with other

[1] 'The Dialogues of Plato,' Vol. III., p. 189. The passage quoted from More will be found in the 'Utopia,' Temple Classics edition, p. 138.

considerations, may help to make up a cumulative argument of overwhelming strength. Many thoughtful persons have become convinced in our own day that the scientific theory of the world is on the whole incompatible with the Christian theory. And it can hardly be doubted that modern astronomy has had a share in determining their point of view.

So much being premised, we may now try to ascertain what has been the actual effect produced by the Copernican system on religious thought. I must begin by clearing away a current misconception. People sometimes talk as if there were something flattering to human pride in the belief that the earth is the centre of the universe, and something humiliating in the discovery that our dwelling-place is only one among several planets, some of them vastly superior to it in size, all revolving about the sun, which again is only one, and by no means the largest or brightest, among a countless multitude of starry spheres, each of them probably surrounded by a troop of companions inaccessible to our means of vision. Whether there are, or ever have been, persons who have experienced this painful and, let us hope, salutary revulsion of feeling on becoming acquainted with the realities of their cosmic position, is more than I can tell. Personally, I know nothing about it, nor can I comprehend how such relative emotions as self-exaltation and self-abasement, being as they are determined by a comparison of ourselves as individuals with one another, can have any place whatever in the absolute self-consciousness of human beings as such. But one thing I do know, and that is that the sentiments of Aristotle and Dante, of Giordano Bruno and Galileo, in other words, of the most illustrious exponents of the two opposing systems, were exactly the reverse of those popularly attributed to the upholders and impugners of the geocentric theory. So far from being the place of honour, the centre counted as the most degraded part, the sink of the universe.[1] To Dante it is the lowest pit of damnation, the eternal residence of Satan and of his most reprobate victims. Earth as the vilest element ever tends towards the centre, fire as the noblest element tends

[1] It was actually made an objection to Copernicus that his system placed such a vile body as the earth, composed of the very dregs of matter, between two such pure and noble bodies as Venus and Mars (Galilei, 'Dialoghi,' p. 274). Galileo himself pronounces a glowing panegyric on the earth (*Op. cit.*, pp. 59 60).

towards the circumference. The sphere enclosed by the moon's orbit is a theatre of generation and corruption, where all the vicissitudes of fortune are exhibited—a notion still embalmed in the phrase 'this sublunary world.' Beyond it extends in rising gradations of glory the world of unbroken and everlasting felicity, beyond which there is nothing but God, the prime mover of all.

Let us then bear in mind that what Copernicus and his successors primarily did was to abolish this radical distinction between heaven and earth as applied to the visible world, and to suggest the idea of a thorough-going unity of composition in the material universe. Assimilation is the great method of reason; and therefore the result told to that extent in favour of rationalism. A more direct consequence was that the revolution in astronomy brought about a revolution in physics which threatened the very foundation of scholastic theology. In the geocentric system bodies were conceived as having a natural tendency to rest, and as being kept in motion solely by the revolution of the celestial spheres, which again owe their unceasing activity to the presence of a spiritual principle, a beloved object whose eternity impels them to an imitation of itself.[1] The theory is essentially animistic, and was elaborated by Aristotle in avowed adhesion to the old Ionian mythology. From Aristotle it passed to Aquinas, whose demonstration of the existence of God is full of references to his master's 'Physics.'[2] But the conception of the planets as bodies perpetually rotating on their own axes and at the same time revolving freely round the sun necessitated a complete reconsideration of the laws of motion, a reconsideration which led to the brilliant discoveries of Galileo in mechanics, followed up and perfected by those of Newton. Other arguments for the existence of God might be forthcoming; but the old argument that nature could not go on moving without the help of an omnipotent spirit was no longer available.

Probably the Roman Inquisitors were shrewd enough to appreciate the bearing of the theories, set forth with such lucidity and charm in Galileo's Dialogues, on the logic of the great mediaeval Dominican. But the Reformation had lifted

[1] 'L'amor che muove il cielo e le altre stelle' (Dante).

[2] S. Thomae Aquin., 'Summa contra Gentiles,' Lib. I., cap. xiii.

the Bible into a position of such unique authority that an appeal to the letter of Scriptural texts seemed for the moment the most politic course. Modern controversies have accustomed us to look on such tactics as dangerous. But in this instance they were merely dilatory, futile, and vexatious. Galileo was a very orthodox Catholic; and in trying to prove that his astronomy could be reconciled with the Bible he showed himself a better theologian than his judges.[1] Assuming the fact of a divine revelation involving occasional references to common phenomena, to describe those phenomena in any but the popular phraseology of the time would have been useless or mischievous pedantry. The threadbare modern plea that the Bible was not intended to teach science is eminently applicable to every passage where the earth's immobility seems to be affirmed. Elsewhere the Bible, unfortunately for its infallibility, does mean to teach science, and teaches it wrong.

A far more serious issue was disclosed by another result of the Copernican astronomy. It suggested the possibility that ours was not the only world inhabited by rational beings with souls to be lost or saved. The schoolmen looked on the heavenly bodies as the dwelling-places of glorified spirits. But when our earth had come to be regarded as a planet, and the planets, by parity of reasoning, as so many earths, such an assignment seemed childishly absurd. At the same time the conviction that such enormous masses of matter must have been created for some good purpose remained axiomatic. That our globe and everything in it existed solely for the sake of man could still be plausibly maintained; but that such was also the purpose subserved by Jupiter and Saturn seemed unlikely, to say the least of it; and the unlikelihood increased with every fresh revelation of the telescope until it grew to absolute impossibility. It was just barely conceivable that Jupiter's moons were created to enable us to discover the velocity of light or to ascertain the longitude at sea; but Saturn's moons are not required for either purpose, still less those of Uranus and Neptune; while their possible utility in lighting those distant orbs by night leaps to the eyes. Similarly it seemed as if the so-called fixed stars could have been created for no

[1] As is now admitted by the Jesuit Father Brucker (quoted by Prof. Morando in his very learned defence of Rosmini, p. lxxv.).

worthier end than to form centres of light, heat, and gravity for attendant trains of planets, which again could fulfil their only rational destination as habitations for beings like ourselves.

All such reasoning assumes for its basis the axiom that everything exists for a purpose. It is an integral part of that 'natural religion' on which Christianity rests, and is generally accepted by Christians without demur as self-evident. Yet the difficulties in which orthodox Christianity is involved by the admission of a plurality of worlds are tremendous. That God should become incarnate, suffer, and die for one world already involves a severe strain on the capacity for belief. But that millions on millions of worlds, otherwise constituted like our own, should not need a redeemer, or should remain unredeemed, or be redeemed by a process demanding so many repetitions of what has hitherto always been described as unique—are alternatives one more unacceptable than another. There remains, indeed, the outlet of supposing the sacrifice consummated on Calvary to have been supernaturally communicated to all the worlds standing in need of faith in its expiatory virtue. But no one with a single spark of Christian feeling could possibly think of a Sirian sinner turned to repentance by the mechanism of such a cold-blooded intercosmic propaganda. There is indeed one sect of Christians—hardly allowed the name by the other sects—whose faith has nothing to fear from a possible plurality of worlds. Unitarians can admit without inconsistency that every world, needing or not needing redemption, may have witnessed the revelation of God in a perfect man, that, to use the words of an illustrious living poetess, a Christ may have died, though not, as she adds, 'in vain' on all the stars. And perhaps Unitarianism owes the adhesion of some great minds in the past and its continued vitality at the present moment to this happy adaptability of constitution. But that immense majority of believers who cherish the doctrine of the Incarnation in its highest form must be content to plead that no abstract possibilities, however perplexing, can turn the scale against the certainties of revealed truth; adding, perhaps, with a sad smile, that the awful realities of evil in this one world present difficulties more pressing than any number of problematic Saturnians or Sirians.

For many years past the question of the plurality of worlds,

considered as a theological interest, has receded into the background of speculation, and has been replaced by biological and historical problems more amenable to the methods of induction. It is difficult to realise that less than half a century ago the subject was debated with acrimony between two eminent men of science, both of them orthodox believers, and that it frequently supplied a topic for drawing-room conversation, then perhaps more serious and intellectual than it is now. Possibly, however, some readers may wish to know what the more disinterested science of the present day has to say about the controversy, and what light, if any, has been thrown on it by the doctrine of evolution.

The subject has recently been revived and treated with great fulness of knowledge by Mr. A. R. Wallace,[1] co-discoverer with Darwin of natural selection. His conclusion is identical with Whewell's, although not inspired by the same religious interest. That is to say, he peremptorily denies that there is any evidence for the existence of such beings as man outside this planet, and urges very ingeniously that the conditions essential to the evolution of a rational creature have not been combined elsewhere. Mr. Wallace's familiarity with biology and physiography enable him to speak with authority on those conditions, their almost incalculable number and complexity, and the enormous length of time—possibly over a hundred million years—through which they must have acted without interruption for the achievement of this momentous result. It seems made out that no other member of the solar system presents, or has ever presented, or ever will present, just that happy coincidence, still less maintained it so long undisturbed; while the limitations of the stellar universe, and the constitution, so far as known, of other stars, reduce the possibility of its having been realised elsewhere to a vanishing quantity.

More than one astronomer has expressed his dissent from Mr. Wallace's conclusion. But assuming the eminent naturalist to have made out his case on the data assumed, Catholic theology can derive no advantage from it. For the assumption that a reasonable being like man can only have been evolved under certain physical conditions plainly excludes the exercise of an omnipotent and intelligent will. In other words, it removes a

[1] 'Man's Place in the Universe,' by A. R. Wallace. Fourth edition, 1904.

single objection to orthodox Christianity by sacrificing that basis of natural theism without which orthodoxy would cease to exist.

Returning from this digression to the discussion in its wider bearings of sixteenth-century speculation as affected by the Copernican astronomy, we find ourselves confronted by the great figure of Giordano Bruno, the martyr-philosopher of the scientific Renaissance. An older contemporary of Galileo, and, like him, an enthusiastic adherent of the heliocentric system, Bruno was not, like his more illustrious countryman, led forward into the paths of physical enquiry under the guidance of rigorous mathematical methods, but rather led back to those earlier Ionian speculations so long kept out of sight by the supremacy of Aristotle, and pressing for reconsideration, now that Aristotle was overthrown. Infinite space had been a postulate of early Greek thought, and had even lingered on among an isolated group in the cosmogony of Epicurus, but had been rejected by Aristotle, with whose idea of a finite spherical universe it seemed incompatible, and after the triumph of scholastic Catholicism had come to be looked on as savouring of heresy. But the whole situation was revolutionised by Copernicus. The celestial luminaries were no longer conceived as carried on a series of concentric shells, but as moving freely through space; and with the shattering of those crystalline spheres an outlook opened into the vast solitudes which lay beyond; while the forces imprisoned within their impassable walls as it were exploded, and rushed out to occupy the illimitable void. Under Aristotle's system the position assigned to matter had been something like that of the populace in an aristocratically governed Greek city-state, fit only to receive the orders and to carry out the designs of an enlightened ruling caste, or of the structureless mass on which the thoughts of plastic art are impressed. To Bruno, on the contrary, matter seemed more a power than a potentiality; an infinite and eternal energy, whence the living forms of visible nature were thrown up in inexhaustible profusion, and into whose bosom they were absorbed again. In his philosophy the subterranean current of mediaeval pantheism gushed up once more into the light of day, mingling its waters with the reopened springs of

Platonism and with the passionate outpourings of Lucretius, which seemed less justified by the memory of what evils sacerdotal superstition had already wrought than by a prophetic vision of the woes it was yet to work. Not that Bruno was, what Lucretius had been, an uncompromising materialist of the Epicurean school. Twelve centuries of spiritualist teaching were not lightly to be forgotten, least of all when the new Greek scholarship was giving men access to the classic arguments of spiritualism in their first dramatic presentation by Plato, and in their triumphant completion by Plotinus. But the foundation of Epicurean materialism, that marvellous atomic theory which explained so much already and was to explain so much more when reorganised and reapplied by modern science, could neither be discarded nor suffered to coexist in unreconciled opposition with the idea of inextended souls as the eternal centres of life and consciousness. In this dilemma the mysterious significance assigned by Plato himself to arithmetical units suggested a link between the two; and Bruno rose to the higher synthesis of a theory in which animated monads, emanating in some undefined way from a supreme monad, were conceived with equal indefiniteness as the absolute reality of things.

Bruno's life shows the high-water mark of the classical Renaissance in its revolt against mediaeval Christianity, as his death dates the first signal manifestation of the theological reaction that succeeded it. But classical antiquity had still weapons in reserve, wherewith to arm rationalism in the coming struggle. Of these the most insidious was the old doctrine of natural religion. It will be remembered how Greek philosophy, working on a comparative survey of all the mythologies then known, had arrived at the conception of a supreme deity, source and sanction of the moral law, and instinctively recognised as such by all mankind; how this conception had passed into Christian teaching with St. Paul; and how it had furnished the early apologists with a common ground on which they could approach their pagan adversaries. Through the Middle Ages it had offered a similar basis of agreement in the controversies with Judaism and Islam; but Abélard already betrays a marked tendency to develop the basis at the expense

of the superstructure; and probably his way of thinking was shared by many for whom the pantheistic interpretation of nature seemed too paradoxical or too confused. And the time had now arrived when natural theism was to become more openly dissociated from the denominational creeds. The religious wars and persecutions of the sixteenth century, the complete recovery of classical antiquity, the revelation of a new world entirely given up to heathenism, the fresh prominence given to Mohammedanism by the rapid advance of the Ottoman power, must have led the most cultivated minds to ask themselves once more whether the true essence of religion did not lie in the great principles on which all were agreed. While the war of creeds was raging their voices were not raised or were overborne, but at the first lull one of them seized the opportunity to frame a message of peace and good-will.

Early in the seventeenth century this favourable moment occurred. In France the Edict of Nantes seemed to have definitely closed the period of religious wars. In England the accession of James I. combined the causes of legitimacy and Protestantism, and after the failure of the insane Gunpowder Plot Rome ceased to molest the government, not without hopes of converting the reigning family by peaceful means; while the feeble remnant of Roman Catholics secured a certain measure of toleration by paying a not very onerous tribute to the impecunious monarch. Freedom of worship was granted to the Protestants in the hereditary dominions of the House of Austria by Matthias, who on his election to the Empire tried to extend the same policy to the whole of Germany. In the Low Countries a twelve years' truce between Spain and the United Provinces practically admitted that the Dutch had made good their claim to independence.

It was during these halcyon days that a young English cavalier, Sir Edward Herbert, better known by his later title as Lord Herbert of Cherbury, planned and partly composed a work described as the charter of English Deism, the famous treatise 'De Veritate.' Herbert's analysis of the principles of knowledge is both cumbersome and confused, and possesses no other value than what belongs to it as the first independent

effort made by any Englishman in that direction. But the real interest of the book lies in its antiquity, so to speak, rather than in its modernity, in its frank presentation of a natural theism like that of Cicero as the only rational and genuine religion. The existence of God as the sanction here and hereafter of a virtuous life, and the expiation of sin by repentance—these, detailed in a creed of five articles, are, according to Herbert, the essential points. Their truth is guaranteed by intuition and verified by the universal agreement of mankind. They constitute the real Catholicism, the truly infallible Church, not built of marble, nor made up from the writings or words or suffrages of men, which does not fight under any particular flag, nor is it shut up within any geographical or chronological limits; but outside it there is no salvation.[1] All else has been added by priests for their own selfish purposes. Another work devoted to the examination of heathen rites and ceremonies makes this clear, while heathen philosophy shows a perfect acquaintance with the five articles of true religion. And if Herbert does not say it in so many words, he hints clearly enough that the superfluous dogmas of Christianity have no other origin than priestcraft.

Lord Herbert can only be called a rationalist in a very restricted and relative sense. His ethical theism, like that of the ancient philosophers whence he avowedly borrowed it, is the residuum left after eliminating the mutual inconsistencies of the traditional creeds, touched with a peculiar mysticism shared by him with his more celebrated brother, George Herbert, author of the 'Temple.' His rationalism—what there is of it—lies in the implied criticism of Christianity as a supernatural revelation. No such communication would be needed to inform the world of what its best and wisest knew already, what all men felt more or less unconsciously to be true.[2] And the attempt to pass current as revealed truth what all enlightened persons would promptly reject were it found in a heathen author betrays the handiwork of a designing priesthood. The argument has remained popular, and now and then

[1] 'De Veritate,' p. 221. The first English edition of this work has the imprimatur of William Haywood, Laud's private chaplain.

[2] This is brought out more distinctly in his posthumous works 'De Religione Gentilium,' and the 'Dialogue between a Tutor and his Pupil.'

it occurs independently to young people with a turn for rapid generalisation.

As characteristically English traits in this freethinking Cavalier may be mentioned an inborn genius for compromise, a taste for the colourless undenominationalism, so dear after all to the lay English intellect, a great theoretical regard for morality—his rather unprincipled conduct in real life inclines me to call it cant—and more intellectual courage than could be found at least then on the Continent. Many years earlier Jean Bodin, amid the fierce conflicts of Catholic and Huguenot, had cherished the same longing for a return to the restfulness of the religion of nature; but he kept his preferences in manuscript. Somewhat later Charron spoke as if no religion had any basis in reason, and as if a man's faith depended entirely on the place of his birth; but his scepticism did not prevent him from securing high ecclesiastical preferment, leaving the question whether he was an atheist or an orthodox Catholic to be disputed by critics down to the present day. Lord Herbert practised a slight reticence in the publication of his opinions, but there never has been the least doubt as to what they were.

The 'De Veritate' did not appear until the psychological moment for a reissue of natural religion had already passed, for the Thirty Years' War was then raging; and the publication of Herbert's 'De Causis Errorum' was even worse timed, for it fell in the thick of the civil war between Puritanism and the Anglican Church. Those halcyon days of his youth had been the lull before the storm. The enlightened age of Elizabeth and Henri IV., of Montaigne and Bodin, of Shakespeare and Bacon—may we not add of Cervantes?—was followed by a long period of violent reaction, culminating in the successful attempt of Louis XIV. to exterminate Protestantism in France, and the unsuccessful attempt of his Stuart vassal to re-establish Romanism in England. The two great religious movements that divided Europe between them created an atmosphere of passionate piety, whose influence has deeply coloured the intellectual products of the period. And the explanation of this extraordinary phenomenon is not far to seek. For not only did each of the two great rival faiths receive fresh energy from contact and collision with its neighbour, but each severally

saw the general conflict reflected and repeated within its own bosom, and was thereby stimulated to the highest possible development of its intrinsic capabilities. Of the well-known variations of Protestantism no more need be said than that there is a singular infelicity, at least on the part of Catholic controversialists, in using them as an argument against the fundamental principle of the Reformation. For in the first place a tendency to variation is a sign rather of health and strength than of weakness and disease in religion as in living species. And in the next place the variations accused were due in no small degree to the incomplete victory of the Reformation and the necessity of conciliating half-hearted adherents or reluctant converts by a series of compromises and concessions which the more advanced spirits indignantly repudiated; while others again, such as the different forms of pietism, sprang up in imitation of the Monastic Orders, and served to gratify the same morbid passion for devotional excitement. Anyhow—and this is the important point to notice—variation, whether a discreditable symptom or the reverse, was not confined to the Reformed communities; for the old Church received a large Protestant element into its fold under the names of Jansenism and Molinism, movements finally suppressed as heretical, but conducive in their time to manifestations of religious genius which have since been made the boast of the organisation by which their authors were repudiated.

The literature of that age has remained sharply distinguished from that which went before and from that which came after it by its profoundly religious character. In this connexion it will suffice to quote such well-known names as Milton and Bunyan for England, Corneille Pascal and Racine for France, and Calderon for Spain; but the list might be considerably extended were we to take in the names of the great pulpit orators whose sermons have survived as literature in France and England. What is still more remarkable, we find the great leaders in science and philosophy combined, Descartes and Leibniz, Boyle, Barrow and Newton, contributing to the defence of theology.

I have mentioned Descartes among the theologians. Such a classification does not exactly harmonise with the great part assigned to him by some historians in the emancipation of

human reason, and therefore indirectly in the constitution of rationalism; nor indeed is their general estimate of the French thinker one in which I can agree. The author of the 'Discourse on Method' was assuredly a great mathematician, and the rules that he lays down for the acquisition of knowledge are avowedly generalised from the procedure of geometry. They are excellent rules in the abstract; but, as is the case with all maxims, much more depends on their application than on their principle. Descartes begins by resolving never to admit anything as true that he does not certainly know to be so, or, as he proceeds to explain, that is not self-evident. Now, that is a safe enough rule where geometrical demonstrations are concerned, because the senses are always there to guarantee us against false assumptions. But when we pass from the experience of simple space-relations to questions about the origin and constitution of things, the self-evident certainties of any particular individual, however intelligent, are apt to be the assumptions that harmonise best with his old habits and prejudices. That Descartes, at any rate, had such prejudices, he took no pains to conceal, informing us at the very outset that as a first application of his method he resolved to conform to the customs of his country, receiving as true the religion—Roman Catholicism—in which he had been brought up.[1] And how little irony was implied by this ingenuous confession plainly appears from the marvellous string of fallacies subsequently laid before us as the chain of demonstration by which he professes to have convinced himself of the existence of God and the reality of the external world. 'I have hardly ever met a mathematician who could reason,' says one of the interlocutors in Plato's 'Republic,'[2] and this very distinguished mathematician would certainly not count among the few exceptions. As is well known, he begins with the attitude of universal scepticism, and his first effort is to get out of it by securing some foothold of certainty, however narrow. Doubting everything, he cannot doubt of his own existence, for that is implied in the very act of doubt, which is thinking, and to think is to be. Now, the second rule of the famous method was to break up every difficulty into as many distinct questions as possible. Here there was an excellent opportunity for subjecting the notion of existence to an

[1] 'Discours de la Méthode,' Troisième Partie. [2] 'Republic,' 531 E.

elementary analysis. But not the feeblest step in that direction is attempted. The reality claimed for the thinking subject is assumed without more ado as the logical equivalent of what had been provisionally and hypothetically withdrawn from the external world; at least no sort of distinction is drawn between them. And yet, directly afterwards, this bare act of thinking is transformed into the assurance that he, Descartes, is a substance whose whole essence is to think; and this is pronounced equivalent to saying that the soul, by which he is what he is, is entirely distinct from, and even easier to know than, the body, and that it does not depend on the body for its existence. Whence it would seem to follow logically that as we know something about existence apart from self-consciousness, the two notions are distinct, and neither can be deduced from the other; or else that they are identified, and that existence cannot be intelligibly predicated of the external world.

In the absence of such dilatory enquiries, worthy only of the old and superannuated philosophy, our instruction advances by leaps and bounds. I find in myself, says Descartes, the idea of a perfect being. The rest of us are, perhaps, less fortunate; but the results of his introspection need not be disputed. Whence, he proceeds to ask, did it come? It has apparently never occurred to this great founder of modern philosophy that the necessity of finding a cause for everything is a rather large assumption, calling aloud for another application of the second methodical rule. But to proceed. I cannot have got this idea of a perfect being from myself, for my doubt proves me to be imperfect. You seem to forget that absolute certainty of self-knowledge which you claimed only five minutes ago. By your own account you have within yourself an example of perfection quite adequate to the suggestion of an ideal type. But in fact you are making stray reminiscences of the catechism do duty for metaphysical arguments. You are a much more interesting writer than Aquinas, but your logic is childish compared with his; and your neglect of Aristotle fatally revenges itself in a slovenliness of thought for which even Aristotle's predecessors would not lightly have made themselves responsible.

Descartes was perhaps more interested in securing a firm basis for physical science than in establishing transcendent

metaphysical verities. God as a perfect being must be truthful, and his veracity guarantees the reality of our experience. Fortunately the internal evidence of science proved a better authentication of its claims than any the philosopher could devise. As a system of the world, Cartesianism, where it was original, was false, and merely blocked the way when more fruitful methods came into use. Descartes' real influence lay in stimulating the great theological reaction which for a time arrested all progress in France, and was only brought to an end by ideas formed in a widely different school of thought.

More effectual help to rationalism was given by his elder contemporary, Hobbes. How far the author of the 'Leviathan' was a Christian or theist of any kind is still doubtful. Many passages may be quoted from his works going to prove his orthodoxy, and a few going to prove the opposite. The former have been explained away as mere expressions of official deference to the Church of England, which Hobbes considered a useful instrument of government, and possibly, like a modern disciple of his, a protection against real religion. But the sceptical passages may with equal plausibility be explained as no more than an attack on the pretensions of Puritanism and the Sects generally to override the authority of the State in matters of faith. Certainly Hobbes represented in an extreme form a tendency of the Renaissance, to which attention has been already directed, the tendency to reinvest the State with that religious authority, unquestioned in antiquity, of which it had been robbed by the international Church of the Middle Ages. All parties in England combined to oppose the teaching of Hobbes, except the frivolous court of the Restoration, with which he had otherwise little in common. But no one stood so massively for that principle of State-supremacy in ecclesiastical questions to which the majority of Englishmen have always ultimately rallied; nor, in spite of his mathematical heresies, had the cause of English science a better friend. For after the fall of traditionalism, mysticism was the most dangerous enemy with which reason had to contend, and it was against mysticism that Hobbes' most trenchant criticism was directed.

Meanwhile, the great movement of opposition to supernatural

religion, by whatever authority, lay or clerical, it might be imposed, a movement not unrepresented in the thirteenth century, revived with the Renaissance, taken up only to be abandoned by Sir Thomas More, and maintained at the stake by Giordano Bruno, was reaching its highest expression in the most typically philosophic mind of the age, a poor Jew who made his living by polishing glass lenses at Amsterdam. 'Spinoza,' says Taine, in one of his early letters, 'was the real Descartes.' But Spinoza owed more, perhaps, to Hobbes than to Descartes. From the English thinker, at any rate, he borrowed the idea of Power, which is fundamental with both, although with the later-born it gains a wider extension and a more varied application. Not that the idea belonged in any exclusive sense to Hobbes. Like most of the thoughts then current, it had come down from Greek philosophy, combined with elements of greater dignity in Aristotle, and more prominently put forward in Stoicism, a system which was then attracting much attention as a competitor for the place left vacant by Aristotle's fall. But the philosopher of the English civil war had given it a new and permanent significance by resolving all natural phenomena into modes of motion, which is a form of Power, and all human nature into the desire and effort to obtain Power. Spinoza goes further still. He makes Power the sole reality of things, their essence and that which is manifested by them. It cannot be conceived as limited, for nothing could limit it but another power, and its nature is perpetually to expand. Accordingly its manifestations, or, as Spinoza calls them, the attributes of this one substance, are infinite in number, and each of them has an infinity of its own, through which the essence of the absolutely infinite substance is revealed. Descartes had called Extension the essence of body, Thought the essence of mind; and Spinoza kept these two names to denote the only two attributes known to us; but he will not call them essences. There is no essence, no reality but the one Power that they reveal. Extension must not be mistaken for space. Space and time are mere modes of imagination, confused presentations of things as they actually are, that is to say, physical forces linked together in an infinite network and eternal procession of causes. And accompanying this material universe there is the other attribute of substance,

thought, composed of what Spinoza calls ideas, better expressed by what we call feelings or states of consciousness, with the proviso that in elementary bodies the accompanying consciousness is infinitesimally minute. With increasing complexity of physical structure there comes increasing distinctness and intensity of consciousness, reaching its highest known degree in the human mind. Combinations of ideas answering to casual conjunctions of bodies give confused perceptions. Ideas combined in logical order reproduce the real connexion of cause and effect, giving reasoned knowledge or right action, for intellect and will are one; and the eternal chain of ratiocination thought out in nature is the infinite intellect of God.

God with Spinoza is only another name for the substance consisting of infinite attributes, each manifesting its essence, which is Power. He never tells us that God is impersonal, simply because the notion of personality had not then acquired the prominence since given it as a crucial test of theological issues. But he spares no pains to let us understand that such was indeed his meaning. Besides identifying God at the outset with the totality of existence, in the subsequent analysis he carefully eliminates every predicate that might mislead us into conceiving this absolute reality under the likeness of a human soul. No mistake can be greater than to suppose that the philosophy of this Jewish recluse was in any respect inspired by reminiscences of Hebrew religion. Christianity, with its doctrine of an incarnation, is really much more suggestive of an infinite Power revealed through its co-eternal attributes than is the unapproachable God of Judaism, separated by an impassable chasm from all created beings. But the parentage of Spinoza's pantheism cannot be referred to any concrete historical religion. It came to him from a far different source, from Neo-Platonism, gradually refined and clarified in the alembics of mediaeval thought until it was ready for treatment by the geometrical method, as he received that method, reduced to perfect French lucidity, from the hands of Descartes.

But if Spinoza departed widely from the passionately personal creed of his Hebrew ancestors, he did not, on the other hand, fall into the mysticism of his Alexandrian and mediaeval

predecessors. His Absolute Being is not all-absorbent, but all-diffusive. Differentiation, not assimilation, is the keynote of his system. Hegel has called him an acosmist rather than an atheist, meaning that his philosophy was the negation, not of God, but of the world. The epithet is curiously infelicitous. No thinker was ever more a cosmist than the author of the 'Ethica,' none ever conceived the universe more completely or more consistently as an ordered whole. His deficiency, if any, is on the side of unity and sameness, not on the side of variety and individuality. In order to the realisation of that inexhaustible Power which is the essence of things, the production of ever new forms must go on to infinity; nothing that is can be quite like anything that has been or that ever will be. The most seemingly insignificant trifles have their importance, for without them the Infinite would have missed one of its manifestations, the universe would be incomplete. Even nonentity has a part to play in the system, being made responsible for the whole of what we call moral and physical evil. All sin proceeds from ignorance. All the pain and sorrow of life are but indications of failing power.

In denying the personality of God Spinoza implicitly denied the whole of what is ordinarily understood by religious belief. But he also met and explicitly contradicted the current theology on particular points. Miracles in the sense of interferences with the order of nature do not happen, nor can they be conceived as happening. No one believes that two and two can make five, nor that the three angles of a triangle can be greater or less than two right angles; and physical laws, if we understood them perfectly, would be seen to have the certainty and inviolability of mathematical laws. If any of the wonders recorded in sacred history actually occurred as sensible phenomena they were the result of natural causation misinterpreted by ignorance and superstition. And as there is no divine interference with an order which is itself the expression of God's nature, so neither is there any such human interference as that known under the name of freewill. For man is not above nature, but a part of it, and all his actions are as rigorously necessitated as the falling of a stone—which, by the way, were it conscious, would believe that it fell by its own free choice.

True freedom consists in the subjection of lower to higher feelings; for in the dynamics of human nature one emotion can only be controlled by another. Perceiving the advantages of co-operation with a view to the heightening of individual power, we enter into contracts for mutual help with our fellow-men; and good men are kept from violating those contracts for their private interests by a vivid sense of the benefits that justice secures.

In his assertion of pantheism and in his denial of freewill Spinoza follows the Stoics. But he parts company from them in his rejection of final causes. Like Socrates, they had held the world to be the work of a benevolent intelligence, adapting means to ends for the advantage of mankind. But such an interpretation of nature could hardly be reconciled with the revelations of the new astronomy, and it was summarily rejected by the new pantheism. Everything in the world exists by strict necessity of mechanical causation, or, in the language of the higher philosophy, exists that it may fill a place among the infinite possibilities of the universe. Man finds some things about him that he can turn to his own account, and others injurious to him that he avoids; but the useful things were not created for him, nor sent in answer to his prayers, any more than the noxious things were inflicted on him as a punishment for his crimes. They are like the properties of geometrical figures, which may or may not be helpful to us, but which exist by an inherent necessity, whether we wish it or not.

I have already referred to the deeply religious temper of the seventeenth century. That temper shows itself in the devotional language, approaching to mysticism, with which Spinoza has invested the last part of his Ethics. He tells us about God's infinite love for himself, and about the soul's love for God, given without the expectation of a return. But such phrases mean no more than that the world reflects itself, has the knowledge of itself as a perfect whole, through the attribute of thought; while the individual mind has the faculty of arriving at a pleasurable consciousness of its place in the eternal order—a sort of feeling which the eternal order cannot be expected to reciprocate. So also when Spinoza tells us that we feel ourselves to be eternal, one can easily understand, even apart from his express declarations on the subject, that such an

eternity has nothing to do with endless continuance in time. No more—or no less—is implied than that we occupy a fixed place in the timeless order of nature, a place and presence without which the infinite would be imperfect, would not be itself.

Spinoza was called an atheist by his contemporaries, and that not merely by ignorant or rancorous theologians, but by the most erudite and impartial critic of the age, the great French sceptic, Pierre Bayle.[1] This has seemed a crying injustice to later ages more in sympathy with the spirit of his teaching. And, indeed, when a writer fills several pages with what he calls a demonstration of the being and attributes of God, there seems something offensively paradoxical in implying that, after all, he does not believe that there is a God. But when we come to read those pages and to grasp their full meaning, the position seems to be reversed. Surely, we say, the paradox consists in applying a name always understood to connote consciousness, personality, love of good, pity, hatred of wickedness, to what is either a mere abstraction or else a collection of distinct objects exhibiting opposite, and even mutually contradictory, qualities. The answer of the pantheist is that the vulgar deistical conception of God involves us in much more fatal contradictions, that such attributes as infinity, eternity, omnipotence, and absolute goodness are incompatible with the limitations of personality, with the toleration of evil, with the infliction for no beneficent purpose of endless suffering on created beings, and so forth. But that, he argues, is no reason for renouncing the idea of God altogether. That would be emptying out the child with the bath. He urges that at all times genuine religious emotion has been pre-eminently associated with just those attributes which exclude personality in their object, and the contemplation of which in reference to ourselves lifts us above the limitations of our own personality, and gives us the disinterested happiness of becoming one with the whole. And he would distinguish his creed from atheism, not only as a positive from a negative creed, but also as an ordered unified system from a dispersive, chaotic view of nature, practically tending towards isolation and selfishness.

It cannot, however, I think, be affirmed that Spinozism

[1] 'Dictionnaire Historique et Critique,' Tome XIII., p. 416.

is altogether free from this tendency toward dispersion and isolation, or that it does not emphasise the self-assertion of the parts and their vigorous claim to an existence of their own, rather than their fundamental unity with the whole and their meaninglessness when detached from it. There had been philosophies before and there were to be philosophies after Spinozism of a far more markedly monistic character, and appealing far more powerfully to the religious imagination. Spinoza's age was indeed one of strongly accentuated individuality, of self-assertion more or less associated with an ideal of simple justice rather than with an ideal of self-devotion; and the sciences then cultivated with most success, dealing as they did with inorganic nature, or interpreting organic nature on mechanical principles, would encourage this tendency still further, would help to intensify its speculative expression. What deserves attention is that Spinoza, working on egoistic lines, should have risen to such a disinterested standpoint as that represented in the 'Ethica.' For this, perhaps, we have to thank the sweet and noble nature brought away with them by his people from their old southern home.

No religious belief in the ordinary sense could coexist with such principles as have just been set forth. Nevertheless, the attitude of Spinoza toward the popular religion was not unfriendly. Like most of his race, he had no love for the Roman Church; but Biblical Protestantism, as he knew it, seemed to supply the mass of mankind with a satisfactory substitute for philosophy. It taught them their moral duties; and in presenting those duties as the direct commands of God it did but throw his own system of sanctions into a concrete and vivid shape. That an institution should possess enduring vitality was already a strong recommendation in the eyes of this realistic optimist; much more, then, if it contributed to the preservation of civil society. With a large-mindedness, rather rare among Jews, he fully granted that the infinite had been revealed more completely in the person of Jesus Christ than in any other of the sons of men. Miracles are impossible, and therefore Christ's Resurrection cannot be accepted as a literal fact, but it has its value as a symbol; and to the Apostles, at least, it was a real event.

Not only does Spinoza foreshadow the various modern attempts to reconcile religious belief with philosophy, but he is also the father of modern Biblical criticism. He saw clearly that the Pentateuch was a post-exilian compilation; and if his analysis of its contents is mistaken, nothing much better could be expected from the state of learning at that time, nor indeed was the right solution of the problem discovered until nearly two centuries more had been spent on its investigation. But in calm scientific impartiality he has never been surpassed; and the consciousness of his own perfect sincerity evidently predisposed him to credit others with the same sincerity. In his remarks on the early history of Judaism and Christianity there is none of the tendency to impute fraud to the founders of positive religions so common among the rationalist controversialists of a later age.

Spinoza has always acted as an emancipating and suggestive influence rather than by the direct teaching of reasoned truth. What is distinctive and original in his philosophy has not been confirmed by subsequent research. To lay bare the fundamental ambiguities and arbitrary assumptions on which his pretended chains of mathematical demonstration depend would be easy; but it is a task more appropriate to a critical history of philosophy than to a history of rationalism. Here it will suffice to point out that what may be called the puzzle-map theory of existence has not been confirmed by experience. So far as we can see, things do not fall into a graduated order, every member of which has its place predetermined by the opening of a logical possibility, then and there to be filled up by an inrush of creative power. Nature seems to rejoice in self-repetition more than in endlessly new modifications of being. Some thirty years ago Spinoza's identification of extension and thought suggested an anticipation of the modern theory, according to which nervous action and consciousness are to be conceived as two sides of a single reality. But that theory—never particularly intelligible—seems now to be considered incompatible alike with a sound psychology and a genuine idealism. As regards freewill, an enormous preponderance of unbiassed philosophical opinion has decided against it, but on grounds distinct from those

adduced in the 'Ethica,' which seem to depend for their validity on what I have called the puzzle-map theory of existence.

Much the same may be said about miracles. The epigrammatic argument of the 'Tractatus Theologico-Politicus' that God would not break his own laws has indeed had a great success, and long continued to defray the expenses of controversy among the deists of the eighteenth century. Minds accustomed to the logical analysis of conceptions are less easily satisfied. They want to know what is meant by 'law,' 'breach,' and 'God.' On a personal view it would seem that he who makes a rule has the best right and the most power to alter it for his own convenience. Spinoza did not believe in a personal God, and therefore for him such human analogies were equally worthless one way or the other. What he meant was, in fact, that the nature of things could not change itself. His objection to miracles comes with less grace from rationalists who, retaining the old belief in creative providence, freewill, and future retribution, cannot stomach the more obvious interferences with the course of nature recorded in religious legends. Of course, science, by tracing unbroken lines of connexion between events and their physical antecedents, in cases where such connexions were not formerly perceived, tends to emphasise the exceptional character of miracles, if they do happen; and, by setting up very strict canons of evidence, tends to weaken the alleged testimony to their occurrence. But this is reasoning on probabilities, and so far a departure from the high *priori* road of earlier rationalism.

It was, however, a significant symptom that the deductive method should be found changing sides; and perhaps the most important immediate outcome of Spinoza's philosophy was to discredit the authority of Descartes' abstract *a priori* reasoning in favour of the popular theology by showing that it could be used with equal or greater force to establish a metaphysical system absolutely destructive of what that theology held most dear. Descartes hurries us through a series of propositions externally linked together by rather arbitrary appeals to the test of exclusive conceivability. I think, therefore, I am; I find among my thoughts the idea of a perfect Being; this must have been produced by a corresponding reality—besides which perfection involves reality in its idea; a perfect being

must be omnipotent, and therefore must have made me; must be truthful, and therefore cannot deceive me; I should be deceived were the world of sense unreal, therefore it is real. Spinoza operates with the same categories, but identifies the terms which Descartes had merely linked together as steps in a causal sequence. Myself, thought, existence, perfection, power, truth, God, the extended universe—these are essentially one substance, and reveal themselves through one another, in whatever order they are taken, by virtue of this fundamental identity. But in passing through this assimilative process they have lost all religious value, their original meaning and mystery have evaporated. And it was precisely owing to the Cartesian partnership between faith and science that this absorption of the weak by the strong had been brought about.

Meanwhile the destructive action of reason on religious belief was going on within Christianity itself. Like the mediaeval heresies to which it succeeded, Protestantism had appealed from the tyranny and corruption of the Roman priesthood to the theory and practice of primitive Christianity, to the religion of the Bible. But the Reformers were content to discard just those dogmas which seemed to authorise the claims of the priesthood to dominion, preserving all the rest of the Catholic system, persuading themselves that what really rested only on tradition could be satisfactorily proved from Scripture, and burning the more audacious heretics whose interpretation of Scripture differed from their own. In this they enjoyed the full support of the princes and nobles who had carried the Reformation through, and whose zeal for free enquiry was exactly measured by their hope of plunder. To question the decrees of the first four great Councils would hardly justify the confiscation of any more Church lands, and might even provoke a dangerous popular reaction, leading to the restoration of the lands already confiscated to their former owners. Unfortunately this new orthodoxy decreed by the civil power had but one, and that a doubtful, advantage over the old orthodoxy decreed by ecclesiastical authority. It demanded assent to a somewhat shorter catalogue of absurdities. Undeterred by the fear of torture and death, certain enquirers,

mostly of Italian birth, gradually convinced themselves that this so-called primitive Christianity and religion of the Bible was neither primitive nor Biblical. Criticism had not taught them what it has taught us, that Catholic theology grew up by a process of gradual evolution not yet complete when the New Testament canon was closed. Accordingly some things in the creeds cannot be proved from Scripture at all, while others can be both proved and disproved by appealing to different sets of texts. Spinoza denied all authority to so inconsistent a document; and assuredly its authority has not been restored by showing how the inconsistencies arose. More timid interpreters appealed to reason where there seemed to be a conflict of authorities; and in point of fact the less unreasonable doctrine was always the more primitive.

Italy, it has been observed, was the birthplace of these more advanced Protestants. We must not attribute this derivation to any particular boldness on the part of the Italians, who on the contrary are in speculation a rather timid race. The cause is purely historical. Before that great revival of the classic spirit known more distinctively as the new birth of art and learning, there had been a revival of Greek philosophy—the age of the Schoolmen—and before that, again, a revival of jurisprudence, a renewed enthusiastic study of Roman Law, of what has been called written reason. It did not perhaps do much to rationalise the judicial procedure of the Middle Ages, but it helped to weaken authority by dividing it, by strengthening secular sovereignty against the Papacy, thus eventually contributing to the formation of national states. And nowhere was Roman law cultivated with more ardour than in the Ghibelline cities of Italy, the cities which stood for the Emperor against the Pope. High among these ranked Siena, once the victorious rival of Guelfic Florence, yet for all her secular partisanship a home of mystical devotion. Here there lived a family in which the study of law became hereditary, the Sozzini. The first of them to make a name in theology was Lelio, a contemporary of Calvin. Having been induced to study the Bible in order to form an opinion of his own on contemporary controversies, he read it like a lawyer, anxious to find no more in the text than it really contained, anxious also to find nothing that was not consistent with reason. But if Roman law gave

a reasonable interpretation to the notions of personality, responsibility, retribution, and justice, then Catholic theology was wrong. Three persons, each of them a God, make three Gods, not one. Sin and punishment cannot rightly be transferred from the guilty to the innocent. Finite transgressions cannot merit infinite suffering. Lelio wandered about from country to country, but at that time no toleration was anywhere granted to the public profession of opinions like these. It says much for the security of the post that he was able to communicate them by letter to his relations in Italy. The new doctrines found an able advocate in his more celebrated nephew, Fausto Sozzini, the systematic founder of Socinianism.

During the second half of the sixteenth century greater freedom of opinion existed in Poland than in any other European country, probably because it was the most aristocratically governed of all European states; and up to the French Revolution heresy and aristocracy have been habitual allies. In Poland accordingly Fausto found a home, and there he published the catechism which Harnack regards as having dealt a fatal blow to the whole edifice of Catholic dogma.[1]

The poison, as it was called, spread rapidly. Jurieu, the great French Protestant theologian, writing in 1681, declared that Socinianism was the religion of the younger clergy in Roman Catholic France;[2] and there is evidence of its diffusion all over England at a somewhat earlier date.[3] Some of the greatest Englishmen of the seventeenth century, if they did not go all lengths with Sozzini, were certainly Anti-Trinitarians. If the Athanasian Creed is true, Milton, Newton, Locke, and Lord Chancellor Shaftesbury are among those who without doubt shall perish everlastingly; and in course of time the staunchest English Puritans lapsed to similar tenets. Nor was the influence of the Italian jurisconsults limited to those who accepted their official teaching. The application of reason to religious belief became more habitual within the pale of orthodoxy, producing a latitudinarian trend among the Anglican divines of the Stuart period, and enlisting an increasing body of

[1] 'Dogmengeschichte,' Bd. III., p. 653 *sqq*.

[2] Quoted by Bayle, 'Dictionnaire,' Tome XIII., p. 362.

[3] Dr. Owen, quoted in Chambers's 'Encyclopaedia,' Vol. X., p. 368 (Art. 'Unitarianism').

opinion on behalf of those principles of toleration which Fausto Sozzini had been among the first to proclaim.

Europe, in fact, was getting sick of religious wars and persecutions, and at the last great outbreak of fanaticism Louis XIV.'s dragonnades had the effect of filling the countries round France with ardent apostles of toleration; while even the co-religionists of those who perpetrated that great iniquity found freedom of conscience a very convenient doctrine to advocate where they were in a powerless minority; so that even such a merciless bigot as James II. had the effrontery to profess himself the champion of toleration. But no party could afford to identify itself so completely with the cause of free discussion as the rationalists, to whom, indeed, it was a question of life and death, for they relied solely on argument, and without a fair hearing the strongest arguments are useless. Spinoza had rather ingenuously assumed that the best means for attaining this end was to destroy the authority of Scripture, as if in the absence of freedom his opponents would ever permit its authority to be disputed; and as if they would not point to his conclusions as furnishing in themselves a sufficient condemnation of the method by which they were obtained.

To reason on behalf of reasoning is indeed either a hopeless or a superfluous task; for however stupid her adversaries may be, they are not so stupid as to allow her to judge, or even to plead, in her own cause. But, fortunately for the interests of truth, other methods are available. The habit of discussion is catching, and spreads without asking leave. No hard-and-fast line can be drawn between the provinces where blind submission to authority is preached as a virtue and the provinces where it is denounced as a weakness or a vice.[1] Where great advances have been made in material prosperity or in natural knowledge, a new prejudice arises in favour of the conditions under which such brilliant results have been obtained. Now, toward the close of the seventeenth century it seemed increasingly certain what those conditions were. They meant a departure from the timid tradition of the Middle Ages, a return to the loftier tradition of classical antiquity.

[1] This idea belongs peculiarly to Sir Leslie Stephen, who has explained it with great fulness and brilliancy in the essay on 'Poisonous Opinions,' contained in the volume entitled 'An Agnostic's Apology.'

That is the point to which we are brought back again and again, to the deliverance wrought by the New Learning, by the spirit of Hellas re-risen from her tomb. Historians have shut up that revolution within far too limited an epoch. Beginning long before Petrarch, it long outlasted Luther, rallying indeed to fresh conquests as Luther's Hebrew Renaissance shrivelled into the skeleton of dogmatic Protestantism or evaporated in the gaseous products of mystical Protestant pietism. Not that what was good in Hebraism had or has anything to fear from true Hellenism, which at this crisis came to save it, to save the Reformation from enemies without and within it. In England the secessions to Rome on the one hand, and to Geneva on the other, which threatened the existence of her Church under Charles I., were averted by the latitudinarian movement under Charles II.[1] In France the work of religious unification had no sooner been achieved by Louis XIV. than it was undermined by the work of a French Protestant refugee, the famous Critical Dictionary of Pierre Bayle.

Imbued with Greek scholarship, Bayle passed, or at least wished to pass, for a Sceptic in the original Greek sense, that is one who, finding that all general propositions, or at least all general propositions relating to the ultimate facts of existence, can with equal probability be affirmed or denied, suspends judgment in reference to all. Faith is inconsistent with itself and with reason; but reason is also inconsistent with itself. We saw in the first chapter of this work that such scepticism has sometimes led back to a sort of tired-out belief, has often been, and still is used by religious believers as a method of faith. It played that part in the philosophies of Montaigne, Charron, and Pascal. Belief, they thought, was at any rate the safe side. But we saw also that, so used, it is a form of unreason, and as such suicidal. Accordingly the decision is passed on to what I have called ophelism, the method which estimates the truth of beliefs by their utility. But the scepticism of Bayle is complete, and embraces this new test. When he wrote the appeal to results was not indeed very well timed. For more than a century and a half the dissensions of Romanist and Protestant had filled Europe with horrors, culminating in

[1] Hallam, 'Constitutional History of England,' Vol. II., p. 221.

the crime which drove many thousand families from their homes and robbed France of her most industrious citizens. On the other hand, it was vain to contend that purity of private life depended on religious belief, when the recently published biography of Spinoza showed how one whom Bayle and all the world regarded as an atheist could exhibit in himself a perfect model of virtue. And Bayle found other examples of moral excellence which owed nothing to religion in the lives of sundry Greek philosophers, which he detailed with obvious predilection in his dictionary, while the crimes and vices of King David, the man after God's own heart, were dwelt on with equally unmistakable satisfaction.

Loud complaints were called forth by this unedifying procedure of the illustrious scholar. But the exasperated theologians had better have held their tongues. Their remonstrances only gave Bayle an opportunity for restating his case in an apology which is a masterpiece of lucid irony, while at the same time it brings together in a most readable form the substance of numerous articles, or rather notes to articles, previously scattered over two enormous volumes. There are, he urges, various motives prompting to virtuous actions besides those furnished by religion, and frequently surpassing them in strength. Worldly honour, for instance, will make men fight a duel, although they know that it is forbidden by God's law. Idolaters are often good in spite of their religion; so why not philosophers without any religion? Moreover, these so-called virtues of the heathen sages, their chastity, integrity, patriotism, and benevolence, not being inspired by the love of God, were not really virtues at all, but, as St. Augustine observes, merely splendid sins. And then, after all, facts are facts. A writer of fiction may be justly censured for making his good people all atheists; but a historian can hardly be expected to represent historical characters in a false light, because in the opinion of certain persons it is not desirable that the truth about them should be known. God can quite well dispense with this sort of pious assistance; and besides, real religion is better served by showing the practical inutility of idolatry as compared even with atheistic philosophy. Whenever the case occurs of an irreligious person who has led an immoral life, it has been duly recorded, and the biographer ought not to be blamed if such

cases are few, if indeed there are any. He has looked for them carefully, and invited the public to supply him with instances, but without success. Probably during the whole existence of the human race there have been some desperate criminals in whom every trace of religious belief had been extirpated; but unfortunately their names have not been preserved; and no robber or cutthroat has ever professed himself an atheist on the scaffold. Nor is this more than we should expect from the goodness of God. What awful consequences would not ensue if characters of exceptional depravity were freed from the restraints of religious belief, and if the unbelievers were not predisposed by temperament and education to the practice of duty! Why, society would simply cease to exist—a catastrophe irreconcilable with the moral order of the world.

Flippancy and irony apart, Bayle was profoundly occupied with the problem of evil. For him the contrast between profession and practice was only a part of the much wider question, why does God—if there be a God—permit his laws to be disobeyed? Neither Romanist nor Calvinist, neither Socinian nor Manichaean, could remove his difficulties. 'Pitiable' is his favourite epithet for their solutions; and pitiless is the dialectic with which he tears up the cobwebs they have spun in their attempts to justify the dealings of God with man. Here, again, his classical studies have proved most helpful; nor can it be said that he has added much beyond fresh illustrations to the arguments brought by the New Academy against Stoic optimism. Leibniz came to the rescue of orthodoxy with his famous thesis that everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. The phrase has passed into an ironical proverb, but is less ridiculous than Voltaire made it appear. Not for nothing has language distinguished the best, which may be merely the least bad, from the superlatively good. The chief pessimist of our own time adopts and defends Leibniz's principle, while energetically maintaining that this best of all possible worlds is worse than no world at all. Voltaire would hardly have gone so far, at least not with safety to his own philosophical deism, although he does not seem to have noticed that it committed him to a more cheerful view of things than the Christian theism of Leibniz, which included the doctrine of

a Fall. Had Bayle lived to read the 'Theodicée,' he might have objected that if God could not create a perfect world, there was no sufficient reason why he should create any world. But such a rejoinder was hardly open to the patriarch of Ferney.

Bayle's Dictionary has been described as the great arsenal whence the freethinkers of the eighteenth century drew their weapons. This, if true, would imply that they added nothing to the rationalistic arguments of Greek philosophy, which it certainly presented in a compendious and accessible form. But the statement can only be accepted with very serious reservations. Biblical criticism, on which Bayle hardly dared to touch, had an important part to play in the coming controversy, and in close connexion with it the crucial questions of prophecy and miracles came up. Here Spinoza is the true precursor. And, what is more noticeable, a merely negative position such as Bayle occupied did not appeal to the mind of Europe. A positive principle was needed, a standard for the army of progress to rally round. Spinoza had offered such a principle, but he came too soon, and his scholastic method has always remained repulsive, even to the elect. Moreover, his theory of graduated existence had been captured and recast in the orthodox interest by Leibniz. What we call science was as yet fragmentary, unsystematic, ambiguous; its chief representatives were, as we have seen, very religious men, finding in their knowledge of physical processes a new support to their religion. There remained, still almost untried, and now, after two centuries of criticism, still unexhausted, the conception of Natural Religion, which Bayle had passed by with brief contemptuous notice, but which had endured through all the vicissitudes of Greek philosophy, had been accepted as fundamental by the reasoned faith of the Middle Ages, and was now exposed to view by sceptical denudation as the bedrock of theological belief. How the general relations between reason and religion shaped themselves under the guidance of this conception is a subject which must be reserved for separate examination.

CHAPTER III

THE ENGLISH DEISTS

A ONCE celebrated but now well-nigh forgotten English politician of the Early and Middle Victorian period, John Arthur Roebuck, tells us that, when a young man in Canada, he was found by his mother sitting up late one night over a quarto volume, which he had just brought home from Quebec. It was Locke's 'Essay on Human Understanding.' She asked him 'what possible use there was in that sort of matter.' Writing long afterwards, Roebuck observes, 'I had then, as I should have now, much difficulty in finding an answer.'[1] The remark is very characteristic of this typical Philistine, who, as he saw no good in the culture of the feelings and the imagination, saw none in the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. But it comes as rather a surprise in reference to Locke, who has sometimes been made responsible for the degraded standards of English life. It might be said that without him Roebuck and the far greater men with whom Roebuck co-operated in the earliest and brightest period of his erratic career would not have been what they were, that he formulated a philosophy for the Whigs of his own time, and inspired a philosophy for the Radicals who eventually succeeded them.

'For this, however,' Mrs. Roebuck might have replied, 'we have to thank the Treatises on "Civil Government" and on "Toleration": I still want to know what good came of the "Essay on Human Understanding."' One might answer that it revolutionised European thought. But what the revolution was, and how it was effected, are questions deserving a more attentive examination than they generally receive.

Locke himself has told us, in his own homely and vivid

[1] Roebuck's 'Autobiography and Letters,' p. 26.

style, how the Essay first came to be planned, and what was its aim. Talking with some friends over a problem which they found themselves unable to solve, it occurred to him that the proper method of enquiry was, first of all, to ascertain what are the powers and limitations of the human understanding, with what subjects it is and with what it is not able to cope. Kant asked himself the same question a century afterwards; and although his analysis of the cognitive faculty is far more difficult to follow than that given by the English philosopher, he has left us far more clearly informed as to the motive and the result of his investigation. Nurtured among the Pietists, his interests were primarily theological. God, freedom, and immortality were for him the fundamental problems, the starting-point and goal of all his thoughts. I cannot doubt that, living when Locke lived, religion had for him at least an equal charm. He has not told us who were his friends, nor where they met, nor what was the puzzling question that left them 'quickly at a stand by the difficulties that rose on every side.' But all becomes clear if we assume that the puzzle was of theological origin, and that the solution is to be looked for in that chapter of his Essay where the respective provinces of faith and reason are defined.

Pascal and Bayle had set these two sources of conviction against one another, the earlier thinker openly defying reason, the later thinker covertly discarding faith; Locke puts an end to the controversy by definitely subordinating faith to reason. For, according to him, faith simply means the belief that a revelation has been given to us, and that it is true. But this can only be known by a process of inference possessing no authority beyond the general validity of reasoning as a method for ascertaining matters of fact. If, then, the contents of the alleged revelation contradict reason, they ought to be rejected; for the authority of the general principle must always exceed that of the particular application. Nor is this all. If, as in the case of Biblical belief, a revelation is accepted, not as directly given to ourselves, but on the credit of those who profess to have been its original recipients, faith is not one degree but two degrees weaker than reason, involving as it does a double inference with a double possibility of error. Locke does not discuss the notes of an authentic revelation, whether as the object of belief at first or at

second hand; but he gives us pretty clearly to understand that it can hardly be used to inform us of what the mind's unaided powers are competent to discover; and this principle, as we shall see, was turned with formidable effect against supernatural religion by his immediate followers.

Wherever it had stood, or under whatever form it had been published, Locke's vindication of the rights of reason would have been felt as a new danger to irrational belief. But coming where it did in the context of the 'Essay on Human Understanding,' it told with incalculably greater power. For Locke did not, like his predecessors, talk about reason in an arbitrary subjective way as a compendious name for the unanalysed convictions of his age or of his party. Reason with him falls into its natural place as the consummation of that vast evolution by which the contents of consciousness are built up from the elements supplied by sense, and our knowledge of a world existing apart from sense is assured. And at every step of the enquiry his conclusions are tested by their agreement with the general experience of mankind. The methods of experimental verification so successfully employed in the physical sciences are boldly applied to mental problems, and with the same destructive effect on time-honoured illusions. Thus the doctrine of innate ideas, so naïvely accepted from Greek philosophy by Lord Herbert and Descartes, is at once dissipated by an appeal to the beliefs and practices found existing among the aboriginal races of America. Ancient and modern sceptics had practised the same method, but only to discredit a reason which for them was identified with dogmatism. Locke was no sceptic, but a firm believer in reasoned truth, in the true reason that is based on agreement, an agreement always attainable by taking pains, and by limiting our speculations to subjects within the reach of human understanding. So far as English thought went, the danger to reason from tradition and authority had disappeared, but the danger from mysticism and what he calls enthusiasm was pressing; and it is against this, whether under the form of pretended innate ideas or of irresponsible individual inspiration, that his most powerful and interesting arguments are directed.

People called this noble thinker a Hobbist; and the nickname did him much injury in the brooding, jealous, suspicious

mind of Newton. Doubtless, like Spinoza, he had received a powerful impulse in more than one line of speculation from Hobbes, 'that most vigorous and acute of human intellects,' as Macaulay, with not much overstatement, calls the author of the 'Leviathan.'[1] But it is chiefly through the new direction given to those impulses by his successor that Hobbes has influenced thought, and influenced it in a manner widely different from his original purpose. Locke's inferior genius was more in touch with current tendencies, more conciliatory, and therefore more effective. His services to rationalism in particular were incalculably more conspicuous. The elder philosopher had, after all, made reason subservient to authority, although that authority was transferred from the Church to the secular sovereign. A belated survivor of the earlier Renaissance, he stood for a kind of restored Paganism, a system under which men of thought and learning might talk materialistic atheism in their private conclaves, while the multitude worshipped under forms prescribed by law, and listened to sermons inculcating blind obedience to their hereditary sovereign. Such a doctrine might suit Charles II. and a few of his courtiers, but it revolted all that was serious and sincere in the mind of England, whether Cavalier or Puritan, High Church or Nonconformist, Tory or Whig. It even came into conflict with the favourite Greek philosophy of the age, the Platonic spiritualism which, as interpreted by Cudworth and his school, was rapidly superseding the Stoic and Epicurean materialism of the early seventeenth century.

Locke, on the other hand, if but a moderate liberal, was a liberal along the whole line. Under no form did authority over opinion find favour in his eyes—whether as scholastic tradition, or innate ideas, or individual mysticism, whether exercised by the Church or by the State. While preserving the fiction of a social contract, he denies that it was ever understood to involve the surrender of the very rights for whose protection it was framed. Government exists only as a guarantee for person and property, and may interfere with the liberty of the subject only so far as is necessary for the attainment of that end. Papists, indeed, are not to be tolerated, because they will tolerate nobody else if they can help it; nor atheists, because their

[1] In the Essay on Bacon.

principles, or absence of such, endanger the social union. These exceptions and the reasons given for them are dangerous concessions to the spirit of the age, and a sad falling-off from the fearless comprehensiveness of a Spinoza and a Bayle. But practically they left opinion as much latitude as it needed at that epoch. Himself a good theist, Locke supplied theism with much better arguments than those contained in the 'Method' and the 'Meditations' of Descartes. For the rest he kept clear —or seemed to keep clear—of all metaphysical implications. Reason in his philosophy stood pledged neither to the materialism of Hobbes, nor to the dualism of Descartes, nor to the pantheism of Spinoza. His analysis of the contents of consciousness studiously left men free to form their own conclusions as to what lies beyond consciousness, subject only to the conditions of self-consistency and agreement with the established results of experience.

While the meaning and scope of reason were being shown forth with a power, a distinctness, and a charm unexampled in the whole previous history of philosophy, the principle of authority had reached an advanced stage of decomposition and collapse. Each religion seemed shut up within immutable limits, just strong enough to hold its own, but not strong enough to gain ground on its rivals. The Turkish invasion of Austria had failed, and the Venetian occupation of Greece was doomed to fail also. Within Christendom Romanism and Protestantism had subsided into a torpid equilibrium, any trifling disturbance in favour of the one being speedily compensated by an equal gain to the other, as when the expulsion of the Huguenots was followed by the proscription of the national Church in Ireland. Then, as now, dreams of reconciliation led to the same bitter awakening. Leibniz, with his characteristic passion for harmony, sought to arrange terms of reunion with Bossuet, but renounced his scheme on being met by an impracticable demand for unconditional surrender to Rome. And within the Protestant communities Calvinists and Anglicans had similarly failed to establish unity of faith either by persuasion or by force.

The deadlock of authority was the opportunity of reason. The halcyon days of the early seventeenth century had returned

with better hopes of duration, and it seemed as if the work vainly attempted by Lord Herbert might be resumed under happier auspices. It was undertaken by a young Irish adventurer of plebeian extraction, but not unlike Herbert in character, and perhaps his superior in ability, the vain, restless, and pushing Toland. A convert from Romanism with a taste for philosophy, he promptly took up Locke's principles, at least in so far as they affected religion, and soon after the appearance of the 'Essay on Human Understanding,' won fame, or at least notoriety, by a small volume entitled 'Christianity not Mysterious.' It brings out with sufficient clearness some unexpected consequences of the chapter on 'Reason and Faith' in Locke's Essay, some account of which has been given above. Briefly stated, Toland's position is that mysteries, that is to say, self-contradictory or unintelligible doctrines, ought not to be, and indeed cannot be, believed. Assuming, then, as the author throughout assumes, that Christianity is true, it cannot be mysterious. Nor indeed as originally taught was it mysterious. The notion of mystery comes from Paganism,[1] and has no place in the pure light of revelation, whose object was to clear up difficulties, not to increase them. It has been argued, observes Toland, that natural knowledge involves as great a strain on our reason as any theological dogma by representing the essences of things, the ultimate properties which make them what they are, as unknowable.[2] But the two cases are not analogous. God has revealed all that is important for us to know about the constitution of bodies; that is, we know what they are in relation to ourselves. So far there is no mystery; and in like manner we may reasonably expect that what revelation teaches with regard to God's attributes in reference to ourselves shall be made perfectly plain. What God is in himself and apart from us we do not know any more than we know the essence of a plant or of a stone; nor in either case is our ignorance of any consequence.

Toland's book raised a storm; and Locke hastened to clear himself from any responsibility for his would-be disciple's opinions;[3] though how they differed from his own is not easy

[1] 'Christianity not Mysterious,' Sect. III., chap. i.

[2] *Op. cit.*, chap. ii., 18.

[3] Fox Bourne's 'Life of John Locke,' Vol. II., p. 416 *sqq.*

to explain. But it won the author a European reputation. Satirists maliciously observed that the fop who used his bookcase as a convenient receptacle for pill-boxes and tailors' patterns spared a place on its shelves for 'Christianity not Mysterious.'[1] Nor was the appreciation limited to men of fashion who found religion a galling restraint. Toland corresponded with a princess in whose lineage intelligence was hereditary, Queen Sophia of Prussia. The great Leibniz condescended to dispute with him on knotty points of philosophy.[2] His name became known even beyond the limits of Christendom; and many years after the publication of his first work, a Turkish Effendi with whom Lady Mary Wortley Montagu conversed at Belgrade asked her for news of Mr. Toland.[3]

Friends and foes alike seem to have discerned that the young rationalist's professed adherence to Christianity, whether sincere or not, was merely provisional. Their suspicions were speedily justified. In his letters to the Queen of Prussia he explains all supernatural religion, in a manner startlingly suggestive of certain modern theories, as an illusion evolved from the funeral rites of primitive man;[4] before many years were over he had passed from the school of Locke to a sort of amalgam compounded of Hobbes and Spinoza; he died a declared pantheist;[5] and in his last work classical quotations take the place of the Scripture texts with which his juvenile essay had been interlarded. But these subsequent developments, however interesting in themselves, remained apparently without effect on current thought, and must be regarded rather as reverting to an earlier than as anticipating a more modern type of irreligion.

The next important document of rationalism is Anthony Collins's 'Discourse of Freethinking.' Like Toland, Collins was a disciple of Locke, but, unlike him, a personal friend and favourite of the master. This, however, may be connected with the fact that his hostility to the popular religion was not publicly declared until several years after the old

[1] 'Tatler,' Vol. II., p. 417, No. 113. The paper is said to be by Hughes.
[2] Leibniz, 'Philosophische Schriften,' Vol. VI., pp. 508–21.
[3] 'Lady Mary Montagu's Letters,' Vol. I., p. 373.
[4] 'Letters to Serena,' ii. and iii.
[5] According to Littré, the word pantheism was coined by him.

philosopher's death. It seems to have been partly provoked by a retrograde movement in public opinion. His 'Discourse,' published in 1713, speaks of the Freethinkers as a generally detested sect. Possibly their increasing numbers were exciting suspicion and alarm; while the rise of coffee-houses and newspapers would intensify and diffuse such a sentiment when it once began to be felt. But a deeper cause seems to have been at work, no less a cause than the intellectual decline of England; or, if that expression be objected to, the diversion of English intellect from theoretical to practical interests; from poetry, philosophy, and science to politics and business; within art from ideal creations to the observation of an often petty reality; within learning from the accumulation to the diffusion of knowledge. English poetry, which had been, and was again to be, the first in Europe, almost disappeared; English science, also for a time the first in Europe, came to a standstill; the English Universities ceased to send forth thinkers of the first class. Even in literature the surprising number of Irish writers implies a relative sterility on the side of the mother country.[1] The intellectual decline was accompanied by a strong anti-liberal reaction in politics. London, which in Milton's time had been a citadel of freedom and a workshop of new ideas, made a hero of the silly Sacheverell for no better reason than that he preached as a religious duty the doctrine of slavish submission to consecrated tyranny.

In such circumstances even the powerful Dissenting interest could hardly defend itself against popular fanaticism. Rationalism, which had to encounter the bitter hostility not only of the mob, but also of the educated classes, from Newton, himself a heretic, down, found itself in still worse straits. Collins tells us that since Sacheverell's trial, England had witnessed a formidable revival of superstition, the belief in witchcraft had returned, and several old women had been prosecuted for that offence.[2] Confronted by such prejudices, he set himself, in no very hopeful mood as compared with

[1] Swift, Berkeley, Steele, and Farquhar were born in Ireland; Congreve, if not born, at least was educated there; Arbuthnot was Scotch; Vanbrugh of Flemish extraction, and partly educated in France; Pope by his religion was largely secluded from English influences.

[2] 'Discourse of Freethinking,' p. 30.

Toland's confident and joyous tone, to vindicate the cause of freethinking in religious questions, that is, the submission of every proposition whatever, as regards its meaning and truth, to the arbitration of reason, or, as he calls it, the use of the understanding, in contradistinction to authority. His argument starts, as all such arguments must, from the dissensions found among believers, all appealing to authority, but unable to agree as to where that authority resides. Bayle's Dictionary seems to have supplied him with all the relevant facts, except a few instances culled from the English latitudinarian divines. Bayle also stands him in good stead with his catalogue of virtuous unbelievers. But he replaces Bayle's ironical hypothesis of a special divine grace bestowed on atheists by the shrewd remark that a small and unpopular body of men are more likely than others to avoid giving scandal by their conduct, while their absorption in intellectual pursuits leaves them neither time nor inclination for vicious indulgences.[1] And in the true spirit of the whole rationalistic movement he quotes the history of classical antiquity as a proof that unrestricted liberty of speculation does not breed political disorder. He also points to the disappearance of the belief in witchcraft, with its attendant evils, in England and Holland, as a benefit due to the progress of enlightenment,[2] and to its recrudescence in England as a consequence of the recent reaction associated with the Sacheverell affair. This argument is so good that it has been resuscitated by a modern rationalist with great abundance of historical illustration, but without any essential addition to Collins's plea.

I have said that the chief intellectual force of England was at that time arrayed on the side of traditional Christianity, and Collins was soon made to feel the weight of its hostility to his position. Among the numerous answers called forth by his essay two at least are well worth reading for their high literary merit. One is by the greatest genius, the other by the greatest scholar, of the age. Swift partly abridged, partly parodied, the 'Discourse of Freethinking' so ingeniously as to exhibit the writer and his arguments in the most ludicrous aspect imaginable. Bentley tore to ribbons his display of learning, and showed that some of his classical examples were irrelevant as against Christianity. But neither of these two redoubtable

[1] 'Discourse of Freethinking,' pp. 120–1.

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 27–8.

controversialists touched the real gist of the question; and both by their avoidance of it betrayed an uneasy consciousness of the slippery ground on which they stood. Collins merely argued for the right, the duty, and the utility of free enquiry quite irrespective of the conclusions to which it might lead. Being himself a deist, and assuming, as he did, that truth was best elicited by the fullest and freest discussion, he might naturally suppose that the result would be unfavourable to revealed religion. And the unwillingness of his adversaries to concede the liberty demanded seemed to suggest that they were inclined to agree with him on that score. But if the suspicion was unfounded, nothing would have been easier than to dispel it. They had only to withdraw their opposition to freethought and to aid in procuring a repeal of the laws and customs by which certain opinions about religion were protected against public criticism. This they would have been extremely sorry to do; and such being their position, they had no right to complain if the cause of liberty became identified with the cause of infidelity.

Swift tries to assimilate the authority of the clergy in matters of religion to the authority exercised by the medical and legal professions in their respective jurisdictions; and the same wilful or unconscious fallacy has continued to crop up ever since. It would have had more force if the production of Molière's anti-medical comedies had been forbidden, or if the introduction of the Habeas Corpus Bill had rendered its promoters liable to the penalties of high treason. Bentley contemptuously repudiates Collins's right to quote the disappearance of witchcraft as a consequence of freethought. It has been effected, he says, by the advance of science, no part of which is due to this writer and his sect, but to the Boyles, the Sydenhams, and the Newtons.[1] But apart from the fact that the belief in witchcraft owed its extinction far less to any particular discoveries in physics or medicine than to the new habits of reasoning diffused by science—it might well be urged that those great men would never have made their discoveries had they been hampered by the restraints of an authoritative tradition such as Bentley strove to uphold in theology, such as he utterly discarded in questions of classical philology.

[1] 'Works,' Vol. III., p. 320.

The leading freethinkers of that period—or, at least, the declared ones—were Whigs; although some distinguished Tories, such as Pope and Bolingbroke, were known to hold the same opinions in private. Swift takes advantage of this circumstance, as another famous master of gibes and flouts has taken advantage of a similar association in our own time, to saddle the whole Whig party with the odium of rejecting the popular religion.[1] The charge was, of course, unfounded, and is sufficiently disproved by the abuse heaped on freethinkers before the appearance of Collins's Discourse, in the 'Tatler,'[2] and after its appearance, in the 'Guardian,'[3] where Addison in particular makes himself conspicuous by the unwonted violence of his language and the equally unwonted clumsiness of his raillery. But there is this characteristic difference between the two parties that the Whigs—at least in the days of the 'Tatler'—'would not have persecution so far disgraced as to wish these vermin might be animadverted on by any legal penalties;' while Swift[4] and Bentley[5] would have put down the demand for free enquiry by force. And while the Whig journalists are honest enough to admit, though with some disgust, the pure lives led by the critics of supernatural religion, the Master of Trinity holds that no man can question the truth of Christianity unless he has a personal interest in the non-existence of future punishments for the wicked.[6]

As an English country gentleman of disinterested character and unblemished reputation, Collins had less to fear from such threats and taunts than Toland. While fulfilling the duties of his position he continued to read and think. He had been reproached with putting Christianity on the same level with such notorious impostures as Buddhism, Brahminism, and Parseeism, with magnifying the differences among the clergy, with ignorantly using minute textual variations as arguments against the authority of the New Testament.

[1] 'Works,' Vol. VIII., p. 164.
[2] Vol. II., p. 114, No. 135.
[3] No. 130, August 10, 1713.
[4] P. 194.
[5] P. 333. Bentley at that time found it for his interest to support the Tory Government.
[6] Pp. 317–19.

But no such objections could be raised against the controversial methods of his next deistical work, 'A Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion.' The issue raised is indeed far more restricted than such a title would suggest; but from the standpoint of theological science as then organised it is decisive. Collins's subject is the relation between the New Testament and the Old, or what is known as the argument from prophecy.

I mentioned in the preceding chapter that the Jews would never accept the Christian interpretation of their Messianic prophecies as predictions of the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth, and I took the responsibility of assuming that modern scholarship is on the side of the Jews. Indeed, if words are to be interpreted according to their obvious and literal meaning, the case against reading Christology into the Hebrew Scriptures is so convincing that even the Fathers could only meet it by an exegesis which would be tolerated in no other enquiry, or, if tolerated, would equally prove any other religion to be true. This was the mystical or allegorical method by which any statement of any prophet or psalmist, or any event or object described by any Jewish historian, could be turned into a type or symbol of some incident in the Church's history or of some dogma in the Church's creed. Now, it happened that a contemporary of Collins, the erudite, ingenious, and eccentric William Whiston, while utterly repudiating this method of interpretation, had proposed to replace it by another method of his own invention, not more rational in itself, and without the prestige of patristic authority. He contended that the books of the Old Testament, as they originally stood, contained prophecies literally fulfilled in the Christian revelation, but that these prophecies had been carefully eliminated by the Jewish Scribes, whose falsified copies of the Hebrew Scriptures, both in the original tongue and in the Greek version, had alone been transmitted to posterity. Collins takes the trouble to refute this monstrous theory; and, so far, he would carry the whole orthodox party with him. But he evidently shares Whiston's well-founded contempt for the allegorising method. No direct attack on it is made; but the shifts to which its advocates have recourse are dissected with such merciless lucidity that their irrationality needs no further exposure.

Granting the truth of Collins's contention, two consequences follow. In the first place the argument from prophecy, which used to be put in the forefront of Christian apologetics, falls to the ground. Quite apart from any miracles recorded in the Gospels, the Gospel-history itself had been represented as one long miracle, as the fulfilment of predictions made long before, safe from all suspicion of misconception or falsification of antiquity, attested beyond the reach of doubt, and unimpeachable as manifestations of supernatural power, since no human foresight is equal to the prevision of events in human history, with exact indication of dates and circumstances, centuries before their actual occurrence. This miracle, without which, according to Collins, no other miracle proves anything, was now shown to be a delusion. But he goes further still. Not merely is a support removed from Christianity, but without that support, according to him, it collapses. Locke had already insisted, with abundant citation of texts, that in the beginning the great article of Christian faith, the very condition of salvation, was a simple confession of the Messiahship of Jesus. And, if the evangelists are to be trusted, Jesus himself continually insisted on the fact that the Messianic prophecies were fulfilled by his ministry on earth in conjunction with his death and resurrection. If the Gospel incidents did not mean that they meant nothing.

Thus the radical discrepancy which makes all belief based on mere authority its own refutation was extended from a discrepancy between the religion of the Bible and the other great Asiatic religions to a discrepancy between Christianity and the Jewish revelation on which it professed to be based. It was no longer a question of trifling variations between different texts of the New Testament, but of a fundamental difference between the readings of God's ways in the New Testament and in the Old. After centuries of calumny and persecution Israel's undying witness against superstition was unconsciously vindicated by a child of the hostile Church.

Not that Judaism as a positive religion had much cause to triumph in the result. In the course of a violent controversy which ensued Collins had occasion to examine the claims of the Book of Daniel to prophetic inspiration. Reviving an argument long before put forward by Porphyry, and recently

hinted at by Spinoza, he showed that the predictions of the pretended Daniel are Maccabean forgeries relating to the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, and going no further than the date of their composition. Here, again, deistic rationalism has been completely verified by modern criticism.[1]

However they might labour special points of scholarship, orthodox apologists always fell back in the last resort on the ophelistic method. Christianity was true, or rather was to be upheld, because it provided morality with powerful sanctions, and provided a machinery for diffusing it among vast multitudes, inaccessible to other impulses or restraints. 'Faith,' in Addison's opinion, 'draws its principal, if not all its excellency, from the influence it has upon morality.' The clergy are to be considered as so many philosophers, their churches as schools, and their sermons as lectures on morality and theology. Socrates and Cicero would have been delighted to hear of a government which made provision for the compulsory attendance of all ranks and both sexes every seventh day at these edifying performances.[2]

What Socrates and Cicero would have thought about philosophers whose chief interest lay in their own preferment, and who looked on the laws against blasphemy as their most convincing dialectical weapon, may be left to conjecture. But they would, no doubt, have forgiven Addison and other imperfectly Hellenised barbarians for their Judaising professions in consideration of the circumstance that their maxims and models of conduct were habitually gathered, like those of the hated deists, from Graeco-Roman rather than from Asiatic literature. Most modern divines would set no more value on the chilling support of Swift and Addison than on the occasional conformity of Toland and Collins; and Addison at least might prefer the religion of nature to a church overrun by his two great bugbears, enthusiasm and superstition—for such assuredly is the aspect under which modern Anglicanism, and not Anglicanism only, but most of our religious manifestations, would present themselves to this kindly but cool observer.

It is a common mistake, though now perhaps less common

[1] Lechler, 'Geschichte des Englischen Deismus,' p. 283.

[2] 'Guardian,' No. 130.

than it was once, to look on this cool reasonableness, this horror of enthusiasm, as the dominant note of the eighteenth century. It certainly dominates the poetry of England and France, and even infects the classic poetry of Germany, with most mischievous results. But the spiritual aspects of an age do not always find their chief representative in its poetry. The great art of the century was not poetry but music, which, for all that certain critics may say to the contrary, is generally admitted to be the most emotional of all arts. Its architecture, as represented at least by the baroque style, seems to set reason at defiance. Its painting is a delicate suggestion of sensuous enjoyment, sometimes healthy, sometimes morbid, rather than an appeal to intellectual interests or a construction of great ideas in form and colour. In prose fiction it is too often offensively didactic, though relatively not more so than its successor, and not without abundant compensation in the way of adventure, sentiment, and passion, elements of aesthetic enjoyment not usually classed as rational. In politics the eighteenth century has a bad name for devotion to material interests; and there is truth in the charge, although only a half-truth. But against this we must set its miracles of inspired audacity, its unparalleled series of adventurers in war and statesmanship, from Bolingbroke and Charles XII. to Mirabeau and Napoleon, who, vanquished or victorious, have filled the world's memories or changed its face for ever. Finally, that very enthusiasm, so shocking to Addison, which leads the mind to fancy herself under a divine impulse, so that she slights human ordinances and refuses to comply with any established form of religion, was ablaze in German Pietism when he wrote, and was soon to be imported from Germany to England in the mysticism of William Law and the apostolic zeal of Wesley and Whitfield, with such consequences to the Church of England herself as Evangelicalism and the Tractarian movement.

So much is necessary by way of prelude in order to understand the position occupied by the great moralist of the free-thinking school, Anthony Ashley, the third Lord Shaftesbury. This writer, a grandson of the turbulent statesman best known by Dryden's famous satire, was a pupil, though not a disciple, of

Locke. By the philosopher's direction he picked up Greek and Latin from a nurse chosen for her familiarity with the classical languages, and at six years old could prattle in Greek as easily as in his mother-tongue.[1] After a few years at Winchester the youth was sent to travel abroad. He visited Holland, then the headquarters of European criticism, and spent some time in Italy, the home of visible beauty in all its forms. But young Ashley had read in his Plato that beyond and above the beautiful things of nature and art there is an invisible beauty of the soul, inspiring a more ardent passion, and bestowing by its possession a more intense delight. That beauty is virtue, that passion is the right enthusiasm, the real, the only true religion; and virtue is rescued by that self-delight from the corrupting association, to which Christian moralists have condemned her, with slavish terrors and selfish hopes.

Here we have the key to a just estimate of Shaftesbury's place in the history of thought. That enthusiasm from which even the cultivated Addison shrank with alarm was shown by the far higher culture of this young patrician to have no necessary connexion with sour faces and narrow conventicles, or with delirious antics and ruinous faction-fights. Greek in origin, it had been recognised by Greek philosophy as the secret of every great achievement in statesmanship, in creative art, and in speculative thought. All such action is instinctive, but behind these noblest energies lies, as we must assume, a supreme and guiding instinct ignored by Locke, a moral sense, assigning to the springs of conduct their right places in the hierarchy of excellence, accompanied by what is to be carefully cultivated, a saving sense of humour, having for its especial function the duty of testing truth, of preventing religious enthusiasm from running to excess.

His warmest admirers must confess that Shaftesbury himself had little or no humour, and that his blundering efforts in that direction do but mar the expression of an intellectual character essentially serious and sincere. But he had a just prevision of what ridicule might do for truth when wielded by real genius, by such critics as Voltaire and Lessing in his own century, by Renan and Matthew Arnold in the next. Here and everywhere his office was rather to point than to lead. By his enthusiasm

[1] Fox Bourne's 'Life of Locke,' Vol. I., p. 423.

for Greece he stands as a link between the earlier Italian and the later German Renaissance, between the Platonism of the Elizabethans and the Hellenism of Byron and Shelley. This classic taste of his, so much deeper than Pope's or Addison's, so much more human than Bentley's, gave him a curiously acute perception and nervous dread of its future enemy, the Romantic movement, even then beginning in England. The subject is a fascinating one, and has been so neglected that a digression for the purpose of elucidating it may be excused.

Perhaps at no time was the thread of mediaeval tradition quite broken off in our own country, whatever may have been the case in France and Germany. We need not go beyond the 'Allegro' and the 'Penseroso' to see that in Milton's youth tales of wonder and enchantment were still popular with all readers grave and gay, dividing the attention even of the most thoughtful students with the Greek dramatists and Shakespeare. 'Paradise Lost' owes more to the books of chivalry than to the Book of Genesis, and the 'Pilgrim's Progress' is constructed on a similar model. Spenser's 'Faerie Queene' could still be read with delight by a clever child under Charles I.;[1] judging from references in the 'Tatler' and 'Spectator,' it was still a favourite under Queen Anne; and it is mentioned as the only subject that the great Chatham had thoroughly mastered. In the early years of George III.'s reign narratives of tournaments and other chivalrous exercises already, or shall we say still, warmed the imaginations of English youths;[2] and the instantaneous popularity won by Scott's 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' goes to prove that the public taste had been already educated up to its appreciation.

We know by sad experience how this seemingly innocent literary fashion was utilised by obscurantists for the revival of mediaeval institutions and beliefs. Shaftesbury could hardly foresee the possibility of such a retrograde movement, but the increasing passion for marvellous stories struck him as no good augury for the reign of reason. He complains that if books of chivalry have ceased to be read, their place has been taken by equally mischievous studies. His age is a Desdemona whose

[1] Johnson's 'Life of Cowley,' *sub init.*

[2] Sir Nathaniel Wraxall (born 1751) speaks of 'the tournaments and exercises of chivalry with which our imaginations are so warmly impressed in youth' ('Memoirs,' Vol. I., p. 32).

affections are won by narratives like those of Othello. People are so depraved as to prefer a romance to the 'Iliad,' Ariosto to Virgil, and Turkish to Greek history. Not content with the Mohammedan countries, they go still further afield and devour accounts of India, China, Japan, and the Terra Incognita (wherever that may be); all well seasoned with stories of prodigious objects or incidents. And even the contemporary traveller in civilised Europe takes care to feed the diseased appetite of the public by describing 'some enormous fish or beast,' sure to give more pleasure by these than by 'the politest narrations of the affairs, the government, and the lives of the wisest and most polished people.' Of course a man of true breeding, when on the grand tour, will not even look at a Rubens for fear of spoiling his taste, but carefully seeks out the Raphaels and Caraccis; and, however dismal or antiquated these may seem at first sight, returns to them again and again until he has worked himself up into the proper state of admiration. This conscientious gentleman, however, is an exception, the generality not being ashamed to prefer Indian figures and Japanese work to the Caraccis.[1]

What Shaftesbury calls a Gothic taste, what we might call a survival of mediaevalism, did not limit itself to literature. He makes it responsible for the silly gallantry, the barbarous duelling, the savage sports of the time.[2] And we are apt to grow impatient when we find him prescribing his favourite specific, good taste, as a remedy for these and all other evils of the spirit. But taste with him stands for instinctive moral delicacy, for nature and humanity, for progressive civilisation. He writes not only against superstition, but against philosophers like Mandeville, who, having discarded the restraints of religion, affected to treat moral rules as wholly conventional and artificial, as lying at the mercy of the civil government. Compared with such a standard, the taste for beauty seemed constant, or if not constant, at least reducible to fixed principles, which all could learn and apply, carrying their own reward in the exquisite pleasure received from beautiful objects studied with a view to what such principles required. This was what reason meant, balance, harmony, self-restraint, such as classic art and

[1] 'Characteristicks,' Vol. I., pp. 338–50.
[2] *Op. cit.*, I., p. 270.

literature exemplify, such as Greek philosophy teaches. And this, Shaftesbury thinks, is not to be found in the sacred books of the Jews.

How far the author of the 'Characteristicks' would have been satisfied with the course subsequently followed by English and European thought, or what he would have called taste, remains doubtful; nor indeed is the question of any importance. But this much may be said, that his ideas, or ideas like his, were a shaping force throughout the century, and long survived its close. An enthusiastic rationalism fed on classic literature so mingled with and moderated the current romanticism that the share due to each in artistic production, in philosophy, in religion, in statesmanship, defies definition. Both elements contributed largely to the English struggle for empire, to the German struggle for culture, to the French struggle for liberty. And both have continued to work as energetic ferments in the modern mind, as factors in the constitution of future societies and creeds.

In one respect the efforts of Shaftesbury to educate his countrymen were certainly a failure. He had with perfect justice pointed to the English dislike for foreigners and foreign influences as a symptom and cause of English barbarism.[1] But that feeling seems to have been rather aggravated than otherwise by the establishment of a German dynasty at St. James's. Locke, Shaftesbury himself, Toland, and Collins, had learned much from Holland and from the band of refugees who made Holland the basis of their intellectual operations against ignorance and superstition. After them the Continental influence tells only as a reactionary force, and English rationalism draws only on native resources. Its next representative, intrinsically the strongest critic of the whole deistic school, is an unworldly recluse who was never out of England, and probably knew no modern language but the mother-tongue which he wielded with terrible effect.

This was Thomas Woolston, Fellow of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, who, after being converted to freethought late in life, made himself notorious by his attacks on the historical character of the Gospel miracles, attacks rendered still more

[1] *Op. cit.*, III., 153–4.

offensive by insulting dedications to the bishops. These were published with his name on the title-page—an entirely new departure in the deistic school—with the result that he first lost his fellowship, and, being subsequently prosecuted for blasphemy, was sent to prison, where he remained till death, from inability to pay the fine imposed by the court, or to find security against a repetition of his offence.

Woolston's conversion had come about in this wise. Deeply read in the Fathers, he had early adopted their mystical method of interpretation, and had made out a long series of imaginary Christological types in the Old Testament. Collins's ironical recommendation of this device for saving the credit of prophecies which were totally inapplicable in their literal sense to the events of the Gospel-history seems to have opened Woolston's eyes, while it suggested a new employment for this elastic exegesis. What if the miracles were the real allegories? The Fathers had often treated them as such while not disputing their literal reality. Woolston disputed it very vigorously; and although modern criticism has altogether superseded his arguments, though his objections are often mere cavils, while his use of ridicule shows the imprudence of trusting Shaftesbury's favourite weapon to English hands, nevertheless there remains a most appreciable amount of genuine rationalism verified as such by subsequent enquiry. One finds the germs, or something more than the germs, of much that has since been put forward on the same side with far greater knowledge of the subject than he possessed, with a scientific calmness to which he had no pretension, and with a zeal for vital Christianity which he perhaps only affected, by Strauss and Baur, by Renan and Dr. Edwin Abbott.

Not that Woolston anticipates what we call the Higher Criticism. He does not discuss the date, authorship, or composition of the Gospels, but accepts the traditional account of their origin, including the very important tradition that the one bearing St. John's name was written last of the Four.[1] Neither does he make the assumption, frequently but untruly charged on modern rationalists as a body, that miracles are impossible. That is more, in my opinion, than any one has a right to say now, and very much more than any one had a right

[1] Third 'Discourse on Miracles,' p. 36.

to say then, even had he possessed all the science of his age, and Woolston's science was probably small enough. But rationalism depends neither on the discoveries nor on the assumptions of modern science—a fact too often forgotten. Reason excludes inconsistency; and the inconsistencies which make a story incredible may be detected when very little is known about the laws of material phenomena. Moreover, paradoxical as the assertion may seem, ignorance of those laws does not necessarily make miracles, in the theological sense, more credible, at least to a clear-headed critic. In theology a miracle means the attestation of a divine commission by the performance of works, not merely passing the power of man, and the power of unaided nature to produce, but passing them to such an extent as to be only explicable by attributing them to divine intervention. Now, in the absence of scientific knowledge, the possession of superhuman powers and the occurrence of supernatural phenomena are things frequently reported and readily believed. But the agency assumed to be at work may not necessarily be divine, is indeed generally supposed to be the reverse of divine. It becomes then a question how to discriminate between miracles on the one side and magic and witchcraft on the other. We must know a great deal about God before we can identify any occurrence as a special manifestation of his will. That, perhaps, is a sort of information which theologians are not backward in asserting themselves to possess. But we must also know all about the physical context of the alleged miracle before we can accept it as in any sense supernatural. And that is a knowledge which only physical science can give.

Now, Woolston's logical position is this. Two leading proofs are offered for the truth of Christianity. One is the argument from prophecy; the other is the argument from miracles. Prophecy as a literal scheme of predictions fulfilled by events is a thing which Collins has shown not to exist. The relevant texts must be interpreted figuratively to give them any such meaning. But once admit the figurative method and it can be used, as the Fathers used it, to explain away the literal sense of the miracles. Literally understood, they have no evidential value, for they might have been performed by demons; and the Bible itself tells us that we must judge of the miracles by

the doctrine, not of the doctrine by the miracles. Only apply this principle, and you will see its force. Read as an actual occurrence in private life, the conversion of water into wine is unintelligible, and even rather scandalous. Read as a type of the change from the old to the new dispensation, it becomes highly edifying.[1] Those who are acquainted with the labours of the Tübingen school will recognise in this method of interpretation a nearly complete identity with Baur's explanation of the miracle of Cana. So with the Samaritan woman,[2] and the pool of Bethesda.[3] Here Woolston does not see his way so clearly, but he is on the right track. And in general what he says of the four Gospels, that they are in no part a literal history, but a system of mystical philosophy or theology,[4] if untrue of the Synoptics, fairly expresses the accepted liberal view of the Fourth Gospel.

Not that the difference between them escaped our shrewd critic, who indicates it very clearly in one passage,[5] but fails to draw the inference that the Fourth Gospel is not apostolic. And he calls attention to the omission of the raising of Lazarus by the earlier evangelists as a strong reason for believing it to be fictitious.[6] In discussing the cures related by the Synoptics an explanation is offered identical with the faith-healing theory of modern rationalists, except that Woolston talks of 'vapours' where they talk of 'hysteria,' and of 'imagination' where they talk of 'suggestion.'[7] On the resurrection of Jesus, destined hereafter to become the very centre of controversy, he is most meagre and unsatisfactory. The totally untenable theory of imposture, inherited from early Jewish and Greek objectors, fills nearly all the space at his disposal;[8] but it must be remembered that deliberate imposture was an explanation freely offered by theological controversialists then and afterwards in reference to religious beliefs which they did not share. At the same time the discrepancies in the different narratives are

[1] Fourth 'Discourse on Miracles,' p. 45.
[2] Second 'Discourse on Miracles,' p. 57.
[3] Third 'Discourse on Miracles,' p. 57.
[4] First 'Discourse on Miracles,' p. 65.
[5] Third 'Discourse on Miracles,' pp. 50–1.
[6] Fifth 'Discourse on Miracles,' p. 52.
[7] Second 'Discourse on Miracles,' p. 28.
[8] Sixth 'Discourse on Miracles,' pp. 4–48.

not forgotten; and the recorded appearances of Jesus to his disciples are accounted for substantially on the modern system as visions of hysterical women and phantasms of the dead.[1] This indeed was merely returning to the objections of Celsus, whose remarks on the subject are referred to by Renan as excellent.[2]

Events quoted as evidentiary miracles must (i.) be perfectly well attested, and (ii.) must be inexplicable by natural causes. But (iii.) they must also be consistent with the assumed character of the Deity, in proof of whose direct intervention they are adduced. Woolston objects to some of the marvellous stories in the Gospel on the perfectly legitimate ground that they are irreconcilable with our notions of morality. Two especially come under this head, the miracle of the Gadarene swine, and the miracle of the barren fig tree. According to him the destruction of the swine was an infringement of the rights of property.[3] It will be remembered that Huxley, not long before his death, took up precisely the same ground, and held it victoriously against the keenest dialectician of the age. And in like manner the blasting of the fig tree (if it really happened) is shown to have been an immoral exercise of power.[4] Finally (iv.) a miracle is not admissible as evidence by those who would reject a precisely similar story off-hand were it used to accredit the pretensions of a religion in which they did not believe. Woolston justly challenges the divines of his own church to say whether they would listen to an account of a miraculous cure alleged to have been performed on a poor woman by her touching the Pope's garments without his knowledge.[5] This is more than a mere *argumentum ad hominem*. It suggests all the reasons available for rejecting modern miracles, and implies that they are equally applicable to ancient miracles. And at the same time it illustrates the characteristic method of rationalism, the demand that all orders of belief shall be treated on the same principles of evidence.

One sometimes hears this method denounced in a vague confused way as unhistorical. But this is to ignore the real

[1] Sixth 'Discourse on Miracles,' pp. 29–30.
[2] 'Les Apôtres,' p. 43, *note*.
[3] First 'Discourse on Miracles,' p. 34.
[4] Third 'Discourse on Miracles,' pp. 4–9.
[5] Second 'Discourse on Miracles,' pp. 16–17.

issue. The question is not by what various motives men's beliefs and actions are determined in different ages or at different stages of social evolution,—but whether or not, in any given case, their statements agree with the reality of things. Human nature varies, its environment varies, and the relation between the two varies, but that particular relation between them which we call truth never varies any more than the relation between the opposite sides and angles of a parallelogram, and, like that, remains always amenable to the same principles of calculation. The laws of right belief never change; the canons of sound logic are applicable to all time and all existence.[1] Where the deists erred was not in declaring that certain creeds were absolutely incredible, but in attributing their former acceptance to imposture or insanity. But the world could afford to wait for sympathetic intelligence. What it wanted then and there was the destructive application of reason to beliefs which were not true. And this the deists gave it in a style which proved that if they did not understand any other age, they thoroughly understood their own. All their books were widely read, and Woolston's pamphlets in particular sold by tens of thousands.

Locke had shown that faith must rest on reason, and Toland that it must agree with reason. Collins added that the disagreement of the authoritative creeds among themselves necessitated an appeal to reason. Collins and Woolston between them pulled down the two recognised props of supernatural revelation, the argument from prophecy and the argument from miracles. It remained to deal with the *a priori* argument for the necessity of a revelation deduced from the admitted existence of an all-wise and benevolent Creator, and at the same time to sum up the conclusions of the whole school in a perspicuous form, and to present Natural Religion to the general public as a working substitute for supernatural theology.

This was done by Tindal's 'Christianity as Old as the

[1] Thus a great master of the historical method has been able to say of Celsus and his criticism of the Gospels, 'les impossibilités du récit évangélique, si on les prend comme de l'histoire, n'ont jamais mieux été montrées' (Renan, 'Marc-Aurèle,' p. 356).

Creation,' a book published in 1730, and sometimes described as the Bible of deism. The author, a Fellow of All Souls, wrote it late in life, and did not put his name on the title-page. As literature it is the dullest production of the school—but it belongs to a notoriously dull period, the years of the 'Dunciad,' the night intervening between Swift's sunset and Fielding's dawn. Nor does it exhibit any particular originality or dialectical ability. But its whole tone is more profoundly serious, and is informed by a higher moral purpose, than anything that had previously appeared on the same side. It seems characteristic that Tindal should belong to Oxford, the university whence nearly every religious movement in English history has proceeded—the anti-papal crusade of Wycliffe, the ceremonialism of Laud, the apostolic enterprise of Wesley, the neo-Catholicism of the Tractarians, the mystical theism of Francis Newman, and the exotic positivism of Richard Congreve. What Tindal taught is already familiar to us under the name of Natural Religion. We have seen how this abstract form of theology originated with the later Greek philosophers, from whom it passed to Cicero on the one side, and to St. Paul on the other. Adopted by the Church, it became a fixture in patristic apologetics and scholastic theology. Finally, the hopeless disruption of Christendom, combined with the continual spread of scepticism, seemed to bring it once more into view as the common ground on which the scattered fragments might meet to sink their differences in one creed and one worship—if worship were still a thing to be desired. The latitudinarian divines of the Restoration and the Revolution, repelled from Rome on the one side, attracted by Greek philosophy on the other, had delighted to point out the conformity of their liberalised, rather colourless Protestantism with the law and religion of nature. Tindal even took the title of his *magnum opus* from a phrase of Sherlock's. But the principle, with which they had merely dallied, he pushes to its extreme logical consequences. Fully admitting the necessity of a revelation for man's guidance, he finds the form of such a revelation in reason, and its content in natural law. A Being supremely wise and good cannot be conceived as limiting the knowledge of what is necessary for right living to one small section of the human race, or as postponing its

full disclosure to an advanced epoch of human history.[1] Nor, in fact, have men been left without such light. Apart from the heathen moralists, heathen religion, according to Plutarch, was a source of happiness, and it cultivated the virtue of mutual toleration to a far greater extent than Christianity. In a less degree the same may be said of Mohammedanism, while Leibniz testifies to the moral excellence of the Chinese, and their superiority in this respect to Christians.[2] In fact, Western Europe is not less corrupt and is much more disorderly than it was under Tiberius.[3] Nor is this wonderful; for the corruption of mankind is everywhere due to priests,[4] who have poisoned morality at the fountain head by substituting the imaginary obligations of superstition for the real and self-evident obligations of natural religion.

Like Chillingworth and Bayle before him, like Gibbon and Mivart after him, Tindal had turned Roman Catholic in his youth, and had derived from his experience of sacerdotalism an unusually ardent attachment for pure reason—a feeling shared by Toland, who was bred in the Roman Church. Like all his school, he cherishes a bitter animosity towards the Jews, regarding them as a priest-ridden people; and a tolerably complete list is made out of the crimes and immoralities committed by their favourite heroes;[5] nor is the New Testament allowed to pass without a certain amount of ethical criticism.[6] As for the Christian dogmas of the Fall, Original Sin,[7] vicarious satisfaction,[8] eternal punishment,[9] the Incarnation, and the Trinity,[10] they are riddled with all the rationalistic objections available before the era of their final dissolution under the form of historical explanation had begun. Nothing remained for Voltaire but to condense, clarify, and aerate what Tindal had poured out with unmethodical profusion from the stores accumulated in a lifetime of reading and reflection.

The deist position then, as finally constituted, amounts to this. Reason is our sole and sufficient guide in life. It teaches us that nature is the work of a perfectly good Being, who

[1] 'Christianity as Old as the Creation,' pp. 409 *sqq.*
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 404.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] P. 379.
[5] Pp. 202 *sqq.*
[6] Pp. 338 *sqq.*
[7] Pp. 385 *sqq.*
[8] Pp. 418–19.
[9] P. 42.
[10] Pp. 87–8.

desires us to be good, not for his sake, but for our own. The rational end of human action is happiness, and happiness is best secured by the observance of moral laws ascertained by studying the natural relations of things. The most essential point is that we, as social beings, should live together in an orderly and mutually helpful manner. Such is the Law of Nature, and such also is Natural Religion. Christian apologists have always admitted its existence, nor indeed could they consistently do otherwise, for nothing can be revealed as from God except to those who are already convinced that God exists and that he is perfect; for he cannot be obeyed unless he is trusted, nor trusted unless he is known to be truthful, nor known to be truthful except as a consequence of his perfection. But, in fact, there never has been a supernatural revelation. Such a communication must either agree with Natural Religion, or add to it, or contradict it. On the first hypothesis it would be superfluous, on the second unintelligible, and mischievously false on the last. And this, which we know by reason, apart from all experience, to be true, is verified by experience in the special case of Christianity. What we justly love and admire in its teaching has been professed and practised by the wise and good in all ages among those who have never heard of the Bible and those who, having heard of it, reject its authority. What it gives along with that precious kernel is a mass of superstitions precisely similar to those which Christian apologists are never weary of denouncing when they find them figuring as an element in the non-Christian religions.

At first sight Tindal's gospel looks like a simple republication of the system put together by Lord Herbert of Cherbury a hundred and twenty years before. There is the same dependence on Stoicism as filtered through Cicero's elegant rhetoric, except that in deference to Locke's criticism innate ideas have disappeared, the same catholic humanity, the same dislike for priests of all denominations. But on closer inspection a considerable progress is disclosed. Herbert recognised the duty of worship; Tindal knows nothing of a divine service distinct from the performance of our duties to each other. And he ignores the future life on which his predecessor had laid such stress as a sanction for morality. This was the result of Shaftesbury's teaching with its inculcation of disinterested

virtue. Possibly Tindal's second volume, suppressed after his death by the faith unfaithful of the executor to whom he had entrusted it for publication, may have contained his views on immortality. But it seems unlikely that no trace of his belief in the doctrine, if he had any, should have appeared in the first and only extant volume.

Among the replies called forth by Tindal's book, two are by writers of ability far superior to his. The first, by William Law, is directly controversial in its character, and has left no mark on the history of religious opinion. Fully accepting Natural Religion as proved by reason, Law contends that the God disclosed by studying the external world must be so far above our comprehension that we are not entitled to lay down beforehand the time and place at which he was likely to reveal his intentions with regard to mankind, the persons who were to be favoured with the revelation, or the teaching which it was to contain. Law also assumes, what no rationalist would admit, that reason gives us the knowledge of sin as a burden to be got rid of, but no knowledge of the method appointed by God for its expiation. And he insists strongly on the sufficiency of the Gospel miracles as proofs of a divine authority bestowed on their performers.

The second reply is indirect, and though evidently called forth by Tindal, nowhere mentions him or any other writer of his school by name, but deals in a general way with their position as a whole. This is the famous treatise of Bishop Butler on the 'Analogy of Religion Natural and Revealed to the Constitution and Course of Nature.' Butler is still read; and much has been written about him in recent years; but there is something very singular about his standing in philosophy to which, so far as I know, attention has never been drawn. While extolled in England as the Newton of theology, on the Continent he is virtually ignored. In this instance there can be no question of anti-English prejudice, for Hettner, who has a warm admiration for English thought, and who has devoted a whole volume of his great work to English literature in the eighteenth century, never once mentions the 'Analogy.' Nor does the silence arise from anti-religious prejudice; for Lechler, who does full justice to both sides in his admirable history of

English Deism, has only the briefest and most casual mention of Butler.[1]

That English critics on their side should utterly ignore this ignoring of their idol is perhaps no more than might be expected from the habitual limitation of their horizon. And this again suggests, what indeed we shall find to be the case, that there was a peculiar insularity about Butler, a something that appealed to his own countrymen, but appeals to them alone.

This insularity does not belong to the Bishop's doctrinal position, which is by no means that of an Anglican divine as such, but of a Christian believer in general. It belongs to his method, a method admirably characteristic of the mental type developed under the conditions of intellectual life in England. Our modes of reasoning have been shaped under the influence of political and forensic controversy, which by their freedom and publicity have become a sort of higher national education. In Butler the legal element preponderates. It is doubtful whether he would have made a great statesman, although he might have excelled in debate; but he has the qualities of a first-rate conveyancer, of a very clever cross-examiner, of a powerful advocate, of an austere and dignified judge—under that curious system which allows judges to leave the responsibility of the most momentous decisions to a tribunal composed of relatively uneducated persons, while reserving to themselves the more agreeable duty of balancing the conflicting arguments on either side. But perhaps the most exact parallel to Butler's apologetics will be found in the logic of the crown lawyers under the Stuarts. Those authorities made out, to their own satisfaction and that of their patrons, that as the King had a dispensing power in particular cases, he had the right of suspending any law at his own pleasure; and that he could levy shipmoney in time of peace, in the inland counties, and for other purposes than building ships, if in his opinion the public

[1] Butler is a little, but only a little, better known in France than in Germany. This is because the chiefs of the eclectic or spiritualist school found his support of value in their attack on the utilitarians. He finds a place in the 'Biographie Générale,' but to none of the names is so little space given as to our great theologian; while remarkably full accounts are furnished of the deists whom he is supposed to have crushed. The 'Grande Encyclopédie,' however, gives a long account of his writings.

safety required it. Their method, like Butler's, was to convert rules of provisional and temporary expediency into universal and immutable laws.

Butler's style is the style of a vigilant and subtle lawyer, always on the watch for possible objections or misconstructions, always haunted by the dread of making admissions which may be turned to his disadvantage by the opposite side. But his imagination seldom, if ever, rises above the question immediately before the Court or before the House. Anxiety not to prove too little keeps out of sight the much greater danger of proving too much. The 'Analogy' begins with an argument for a future life. I need hardly say that as an argument it is totally worthless, no more being shown than that consciousness can exist independently of the limbs and organs of sense, whereas the real question is whether it can exist independently of the nervous system. But the interesting thing is that the argument, good or bad, goes as far to prove the past eternity of the soul as its future eternity, and proves as much for every other animal as for man. Butler sees the latter though not the former possibility; but the general implications of his method escape him. What analogy would suggest on his own showing —I do not say in reality—is not an immortality of disembodied souls in a state of unchangeable beatitude or misery, but a perpetual transmigration of souls from body to body, with endless vicissitudes of good and evil fortune.

As we proceed the case for this primitive faith becomes stronger. God, we are told, governs by rewards and punishments. In modern phraseology life-subserving actions are attended by pleasure, actions of an opposite tendency by pain; therefore we may suppose that the same system will be continued in a future state. Certainly, if we are to have bodies, if we care to preserve them, if our future fate is to remain, what it is in this life, utterly uncertain, if the alternative between virtuous and vicious conduct is always to be left open. Millions of human beings have looked forward to that sort of eternity; but we send out missionaries to convert them to the hope of better things. Butler gets out of the difficulty with the help of a fresh analogy, or rather by arbitrarily restricting the analogy to such points as suit his purpose. In the visible order of things the possibilities of recovering from a false step or from a fall

are, as he points out, strictly limited. There is a line which cannot be overstepped without fatal consequences. Nature makes death the penalty of certain imprudences; and civil government, which is a part of nature, visits certain crimes with death also. It might be suggested that the conduct which nature is said to punish capitally is wrong precisely because it leads to death; and that the English criminal law of Butler's time was not a very happy illustration of divine justice. But there is no need for subtleties. Let it suffice to observe that nature knows nothing about eternal torments, and that even the Parlement of Paris did not attempt to prolong the agonies of Damiens beyond a single day. The conduct of a deity, even when studiously modelled on that of the most savage despots, can after all be but very imperfectly illustrated by the analogy of their worst excesses. Indeed, the analogical argument would more effectively justify the ways of man to God than the ways of God to man.

That is a danger Butler did not see. But there is another pitfall into which he walks with his eyes open. I refer to the well-known sceptical, or rather atheistic, tendency of the 'Analogy.' If natural religion is open to the same moral difficulties as revealed religion, it seems more logical to argue that both must be rejected than that both must be accepted. And, in fact, Butler is said to have been more successful in driving deists further down the slope of unbelief than in winning them back to Christianity. At the same time it would be a mistake to suppose that he presented the alternative so crudely as some of his modern admirers assume. The Bishop neither did, nor could, shut up his opponents to a logical choice between atheism (or scepticism) and orthodoxy. He and they had far too much common ground to admit of any such summary procedure. He never treats natural religion as a rival system opposed to the Christian revelation, nor yet as a system resting on the same arguments, so that the two must stand or fall together. According to him, the doctrines of God, the providential government of the world, and a future state of rewards and punishments, are truths demonstrable by man's unaided reason. Christianity, on the other hand, rests on purely external evidence, on what were known as the arguments from prophecy and miracles. At most it is contended that the

course of nature gives a certain *a priori* probability to revelation. As the ordinary providential government of the world is administered by a system of delegation, by the interposition of agents between God and man, what more likely than that the work of salvation should be carried on through the mediation of Christ? And as this world's blessings are very unevenly distributed, may we not expect the message of salvation to be communicated with similar degrees of partiality? For some souls that message will have been sent in vain; but we can reconcile ourselves to their eternal perdition by remembering that, after all, it will be their own fault, and that nature, too, kills off those whom she cannot reform.

It seems a strange way of removing difficulties to multiply them *ad infinitum*. But the utter absurdity of Butler's method, as understood by his modern admirers, was less obvious to its author than it is to us, being originally concealed by a logical artifice, which the foregoing summary may help to exhibit in a clearer light. His vague use of analogy enables him to blur the line of demarcation between two quite distinct modes of apologetic reasoning, between furnishing positive presumptions that revealed religion is true, and removing difficulties that impede its acceptance. Sometimes it is left doubtful to which class the argument belongs, and sometimes there seems to be an attempt to convert a battering-ram into a buttress. Many readers, I suspect, must have laid down their Butler without very well knowing whether the doctrine of vicarious satisfaction, for instance, is something the recognition of which makes Christianity more credible, or a disagreeable feature of the Gospel only made endurable by reflecting that the transfer of suffering from the guilty to the innocent is an eternal fact of experience, no more explicable under one system of divine providence than under another.

But this indistinctness is a small matter compared with the fallacy of equivocation by which the whole 'Analogy' is pervaded. I refer to the attempted assimilation of government by direct personal intervention to government by law, the equation between natural and supernatural religion effected by a transposition of values from each side to the other. The world of experience as interpreted by physical science, even in Butler's time, presents the appearance of a self-contained

mechanism, an uninterrupted series of causes and effects, where at every moment the total condition of things results from their total condition at the previous moment. It may have been originally constructed and set going by a conscious will, but—apart from the religious tradition whose trustworthiness is under examination—there is no evidence of any interference with the causal chain. That is what we mean by the reign of law. Good, says Butler, but among these constant combinations of antecedents and consequences I observe that moral, that is to say, life-subserving, actions are accompanied by pleasure, and immoral or life-destroying actions by pain. In this arrangement I discern the hand of a moral Lawgiver, just as I should discern it in civil society if the laws of the statute-book had power to enforce themselves without the intervention of the judiciary and the executive. Thus will is dexterously substituted for law. But it will be objected that the visible world by no means offers the edifying spectacle assumed. Without going so far as to say that vice is rewarded and virtue punished as often as the reverse, it is, at any rate, certain that happiness and misery are not distributed in strict proportion to the deserts of those to whom they are meted out. In fact, no other arrangement is compatible with the unimpeded operation of natural causes. That is how the deist explains the existing moral anomalies, and Butler accepts the explanation, quietly putting back law in place of will. At the same time he contends that the visible order leads us—by analogy, of course—to an invisible futurity where justice shall reign supreme, just as childhood is a preparation for the duties of riper age. In the world, interpreted as a state of probation, will once more replaces law. Unfortunately this pedagogic theory of our present life comes into violent collision with the admitted fact that most people grow worse with increasing years, and become less and less fitted for a purely spiritual existence. At this juncture not the utmost audacity of a crown-lawyer under the Stuarts could equal that of our theological Newton. With icy composure he points out a fresh analogy, another constitutional precedent, so to speak. 'Of the numerous seeds of vegetables and bodies of animals which are adapted and put in the way, to improve to such a point of natural maturity and perfection, we do not see that perhaps

one in a million actually does. For the greatest part of them decay before they are improved to it, and appear to be absolutely destroyed.' And so if the number of damned souls exceed the saved a millionfold, that appalling disproportion need not shake our optimistic faith.[1] Here the logic is on a level with the sentiment. Seeds are not sentient beings, death is not prolonged suffering, and the processes of organic growth are quite different from that training of children by wise and good parents which originally suggested the analogy. But all considerations of truth and justice are discarded, in order that will may make its final escape by exchanging identities with irresponsible law.

The atrocious words just quoted seem to indicate a moral perversion, for which some have accounted by calling Butler callous and unsympathetic.[2] Such, however, does not seem to have been his character. What little we know about him rather goes to show that he was soft-hearted, profusely, impulsively charitable. But here we are not dealing with the real man any more than when we are confronted by a lawyer speaking to his brief, or a party politician defending the government for carrying on an unjust and cruel war. In private they may be the kindest of men; but feeling must not be let interfere with business.

Original sin, vicarious satisfaction, and eternal punishment, are thus more or less awkwardly shuffled out of the way by what is offered as an analogy but is really an *alibi*. They may possibly be the results of self-executing law—not, as would seem, the most perfect substitute for personally executed law. Neither Butler nor any other theologian of the time seems to have suspected that when these dogmas were first formulated, neither those who preached nor those who accepted them saw any difficulty or moral mystery about the matter. Once stated, they were self-evidencing truths. That God should employ all the resources of omnipotence to take vengeance on his enemies, that the responsibility for disobedience to his commands should descend through endless generations, or that merit should be

[1] 'Analogy,' Pt. I., chap. v., near the end.

[2] 'He was wanting in feeling and the power of sympathy, and his religious philosophy is grievously marked with this defect. He could even commit the cruel platitude of pointing to the waste of seeds as a parallel to the waste of souls' (Goldwin Smith's 'Rational Religion,' p. 76).

passed about like current coin, seemed no more paradoxical to them than it seems paradoxical to most of us that titles should be inherited, that certain persons should be called a disgrace to their family, or that we should feel proud of the great men whom our country has produced. If anything, the real wonder, the awe-inspiring mystery, was not that God should punish his creatures, but that he should forgive them; and the dogmas afterwards so decried were in fact elaborate apologies, devices to make it appear a little less unreasonable and incredible. And the same modes of thought survive in undiminished vigour among the ignorant classes of modern society, who are always ready to welcome the dogmas which embody them when presented by impassioned preachers in the light of their own emotional experience. It is related that one day when Woolston was walking in St. George's Fields, 'a jolly young woman met him and accosted him in the following manner, looking steadfastly in his face. "You old rogue, are you not hanged yet?" To which Mr. Woolston answered, "Good woman, I know you not; pray what have I done to offend you?"; to which the woman replied: "You have writ against my Saviour; what would become of my poor sinful soul if it was not for my dear Saviour? My Saviour who died for such wicked sinners as I am."'[1] This poor woman's religion does not seem to have been of a very practical character. But her touching speech is worth far more than all that Butler or his fellow-apologists ever wrote in defence of their creed. It goes down to the very core of Christianity, and reveals the chord soon destined to quiver in millions of hearts under the touch of Wesley and Whitfield.

After all, Butler does not give the deist a choice of difficulties, but simply adds a new set to those already experienced. At the utmost he gets rid of a part of the presumption raised against Christianity in the name of natural religion. I say a part; for the admission of a God who rules by invariable law, even when special intervention on behalf of oppressed innocence seems to be demanded, makes against the probability of a miraculous revelation. And Tindal's criticism, whatever else it did, had at least the effect of destroying the *a priori* probability of such a revelation. For assuming—what both sides were

[1] I quote from an anonymous 'Life of Mr. Woolston,' published in 1733.

agreed upon—the existence of natural religion, there seemed a greater probability in its being all-sufficient than in its needing to be supplemented by such late, partial, and obscure disclosures of the divine will as are contained in the Biblical records. The whole controversy then reduced itself to a question of historical fact. Had such a revelation of God's will as Christianity claimed to embody been actually given? And so Butler brings us back to the old arguments from prophecy and miracles, already discredited by Collins and Woolston.

As a result of deistic criticism, the triumphant confidence of earlier apologists gives place to more modest pretensions. Probability in various degrees is substituted for certainty. But to construct a just theory of probable evidence for historical occurrences, even had the knowledge of his time supplied materials for the purpose, was a task beyond Butler's powers. The author of the 'Analogy' was indeed singularly devoid of philosophical intelligence. His treatment of the doctrine of necessity would alone prove his incompetence for grappling with speculative problems. With all the advantage of writing after Hobbes, Locke, and Collins, he totally fails to catch the distinction between fatalism and determinism, between the doctrine that our lot has been fixed beforehand irrespective of our own actions, and the doctrine that our actions, in common with every other occurrence, take their place in an unbroken chain of causes and effects. This, indeed, is another instance of his habitual confusion of law with will. He can only understand necessity as fate, for fate only means some undated resolution of the divine will. The fatalist refusing to act at all, ignores the orderly concatenation of events as much as the libertarian who maintains that his volitions are independent of motives. The one believes in causes without effects, the other believes in effects without causes.

Determinism as a rule goes with rationalism, and the English freethinkers passed for being determinists to a man.[1] The connexion is obvious. Religious belief among the enormous majority of Christians has at all times implied the doctrine that

[1] In the paper in the 'Guardian' referred to above Addison proposes to call them 'automata,' little dreaming that the name would be one day accepted by Huxley and Clifford.

men are sinful, and that as such they deserve punishment after death. But deny freewill, and such a doctrine becomes inconsistent with reason. For it represents the Creator as punishing his creatures for actions the sole responsibility of which falls on himself, since he alone started the chain of causes which produced them. This, of course, is not an admission that freewill would justify future punishment conceived as a useless infliction of pain. It is merely an assertion that hell without freewill would be a moral monstrosity. Nor is it a denial that pain as a deterrent motive may be rightly inflicted on law-breakers in this life. On the contrary, it is a reason for such infliction. The more amenable men are to pleasure and pain, the more desirable is it that these motives should be used to regulate their conduct.

To such considerations, simple as they seem, Butler was, or at least affected to be, totally blind.[1] In this instance he does for once what his usual models, the parliamentary and the forensic advocate, do every day; he tries to get out of his difficulties by raising a laugh. But the unwonted display of humour is grim enough. We are treated to a ludicrous picture of what would happen to a child brought up on necessarian or rather fatalistic principles. Naturally he gets into all sorts of trouble, makes himself generally hated, and, if not cut off by accident in early youth, ends his career on the scaffold. Never was Dr. Johnson's aphorism more relevant, that ridicule is not the test of truth, but truth the test of ridicule. Philosophical necessity is not fate; and the young determinist will, with equally good training, take as good care of himself as the boy or girl who has been nourished on freewill—probably, indeed, his chances of survival will be improved, as such a theory of life tends to make its pupil more patient and less exacting.

Had Butler been brought to see the force of this reasoning, he might perhaps have consented to restate his position in some such terms as the following. 'Distinguishing as you think fit

[1] 'Analogy,' Pt. I., chap. vi. Butler's primary object is to show that, assuming necessity, future punishment is still to be expected. Nevertheless his intention is clearly, at the same time, to write a satire on Collins. I would invite any candid admirer of the Bishop's to read his chapter together with Collins's 'Enquiry respecting Human Liberty,' and then say which is, at any rate, the more modern-minded of the two.

and calling yourselves whatever you please, you must allow that there is a complete analogy between the two systems of government, the natural, or human, and the divine. In both hope and fear are used as motives to secure good conduct, and, freedom or no freedom, the system works well.' It works well, we reply, where experience shows a certain connexion between actions and their consequences; and where the painful associations connected with bad conduct may lead to its avoidance. 'But,' as Bolingbroke says in words which cannot be improved, 'what effect of this kind can further punishments have, when the system of human government is at an end, and the state of probation over; when there is no further room for reformation of the wicked nor reparation to the injured by those who injured them; in fine when the eternal lots of mankind are cast, and terror is of no further use?'[1]

Returning to our more immediate subject of probability as applied to Christian evidences, we have to consider what light, if any, has been thrown on it by the 'Analogy.' Here, where Butler figures as a constructive thinker, he naturally betrays more philosophical incompetence than when he was performing the comparatively easy task of criticism. His way of dealing with the alleged improbability of miracles is boldly to deny it. Their occurrence, according to him, is not more unlikely than the occurrence of any other event. 'There is a presumption of a million to one against the story of Caesar or any other man.' And so evidence enough to prove the story of Caesar is evidence enough to prove a miracle. This is to confound the intrinsic improbability of an alleged occurrence with the improbability of our having been able to foretell what has actually occurred. Then there is an appeal to our ignorance of the constitution of nature as precluding scepticism with regard to the possibility of exceptional events. Here, as elsewhere, the Bishop proves too much, with the result that his argument is absolutely fatal to miracles as evidential facts. To receive them as such we must know quite enough about the constitution of nature to be sure that they were not produced by some merely physical cause. We cannot even accept the reports of their occurrence without some knowledge of necessary

[1] 'Works,' Vol. IV., p. 452 (American edition).

sequence, irreconcilable, so far as it goes, with the sceptical standpoint. For otherwise how can we tell that the witnesses were veracious, that they were not hallucinated at the time, that their memories did not play them false, that the narratives we read really convey the meaning attributed to them? To identify any particular phenomenon as a case of divine interference with the course of nature requires even more than this. To repeat what has already been pointed out, it requires that we should know not only a good deal about nature, but also a good deal about God, and all about the alleged phenomenon—which in the case of the Gospel miracles, as Woolston showed, we do *not* know; while all we know, or that Butler knew, about nature and its First Cause, supplies an overwhelming presumption that the one does not interfere with the other.

Even supposing Butler had provided, what he has not provided, some good working criterion for distinguishing between natural and supernatural occurrences, and at the same time admitting that no better evidence is required for the supernatural than for the natural, he will still have proved too much. Christianity will be suffocated in oxygen, drowned in the flood of miracles let loose on the world. Angel visits will not be few; oxen will speak with the authority of Roman history; witchcraft will revive in Lancashire and elsewhere;—but we may happily rely on the Inquisition to root it out, thanks to the speedy reconciliation of England with Rome, the miraculous attestation of whose claims no true disciple of Butler can dispute. But Rome herself will only enjoy a temporary and provisional supremacy pending the time when some new incarnation of Buddha or some tenth Avatar of Vishnu shall once more let loose the pent-up flood of Oriental superstition on our poor, meagre, half-rationalised Occidental credibilities which once were creeds.

According to Butler's principles, evidence good enough to prove that an old woman was seen coming out of the church door by day must be good enough to prove that another old woman was seen flying over the church steeple by night on a broomstick. The philosophic love of truth for its own sake would have saved him from such an absurdity. But for truth as such he, like many other eminent Englishmen, cared nothing. Knowledge, in his opinion, is only valuable as a guide to action,

and we are often obliged to form the most important decisions on merely probable evidence. If Christianity is true, we are highly interested in believing it; should it turn out not to be true, we have lost nothing by believing it, except, perhaps, some very doubtful indulgences. For practical purposes, therefore, a bare probability—there is a good deal more than that, but we need claim no more—is in this instance equal to the strongest proof.

And a proof, we may add, capable of inconveniently wide application. Butler habitually talks as if there were no supernatural religion in the world but Christianity, and no Christian church but the Church of England. He tells his opponents that their arguments are as good against natural religion as against revelation. But Tindal had been beforehand with him in this dilemmatic logic. There is, said the deist champion, no alternative between the religion of nature and Popery; and he knew something about it, having been a convert to Rome in his youth. He was assuming, indeed, what Butler would not have admitted, that the supernaturalist position really rests upon authority. But the argument from probability has the same tendency. People put about that the Bishop of Durham had been received into the Roman communion on his deathbed—a false and malicious report, no doubt, but one which showed a just perception of the consequences to which the author of the 'Analogy' might well have been driven by his own principles. Henry IV. of France had already drawn the same conclusion. 'All of you,' said that astute politician, addressing a mixed assemblage of Roman Catholic and Protestant divines, 'all of you agree that I may be saved if I become a Catholic. Half of you assure me that if I remain a Protestant I am certain to be damned. I shall therefore choose the safe course, which is the former.' And his example was followed, avowedly for the same reason, by many others of humbler rank in the following century. Pascal turned the terroristic argument against the freethinkers of his time, in apparent forgetfulness of its applicability to the Jansenist controversy. But, with a finer sense than Butler's of the real issue involved between belief and denial, he recommended the destruction of reason by a course of stupefying religious observances.

That a thinker of the highest intellectual eminence should preach intellectual suicide may perhaps be pardoned even by those to whom such mental agonies as he experienced are unknown. But that a gallant French gentleman should be content to rest religious belief on the most dastardly considerations of personal safety is a striking witness to the degrading effect of superstition. Surely there was nothing quite so demoralising as this in the theological opportunism of his unfortunate Jesuit victims. Surely a manlier note is struck by the peasant in one of Mr. Thomas Hardy's novels, who does not deny that the Dissenters have a better chance of being saved than Church people, but maintains that for him at least to follow their example would be a mean way of securing his salvation. And what if, after all, the sordid calculation proved a mistake, if enrolment in 'the strong immortal bands' were not purchasable by the sacrifice of what is least mortal in man, if the King of Heaven reserved his sharpest vengeance for the wretched coward who had not even hidden his uninvested talent in a napkin, but had flung it into a morass? 'Hateful to God and to his enemies' one would think that such souls must indeed be, and destined to a worse abode than Dante's Limbo.

A calculus of probabilities based on utter ignorance of the facts must in truth work out equal chances for all imaginable alternatives. Assuming total ignorance of God, it is just as likely that he will reward vice and punish virtue as the contrary, or that he will reward both or neither. Theologians rely on his promises and threats. But the fulfilment of these has no other guarantee than his veracity, a quality which cannot, without self-contradiction, be ascribed to the unknowable. And assuming a real revelation to have been made, the word veracity is unmeaning unless we are permitted to understand it in a purely human sense. So much will hardly be disputed by theologians, who have always held God's truth to be essentially the same as man's truth—with the trifling exception of calling a million years a day, and the like. But no consideration will justify this assumption which will not also justify us in assuming that his righteousness and mercy are also to be understood in a strictly human sense. Now, that is exactly what Pascal refuses to admit, for, as he truly observes, nothing can be more opposed to our ideas of justice than that Adam's

descendants should be damned for his disobedience. In such conditions—or rather in such absence of conditions—the threat of damnation itself becomes ineffectual. Black may mean black, or white, or some other colour, or no colour at all.

Butler is, of course, much less sceptical than Pascal; and, living in a more rationalistic age, he is obliged to show a certain ceremonious respect for reason. But for all practical purposes—and he is nothing if not practical—his probabilism is equally useless. It supplies us with no principle of preference in choosing between the different Christian communities, or, for that matter, between Christianity and any other religion. If anything, his theories about the soul and its present life, considered as a state of probation, are, as I have pointed out, less favourable to the religion of the Gospel than to the Oriental doctrine of metempsychosis—a conclusion more welcome to Theosophists than to Butler's official successors in the Church of England.

In point of fact the 'Analogy' has tended to send its bolder readers to agnosticism, and its more timid readers to Rome. But its logical applicability to the defence of any and every superstition was exposed at once by one of Butler's shrewdest contemporaries, Thomas Chubb. This man, a self-educated tallow-chandler, is in more than one way a noteworthy figure. In him rationalism, represented at the summit of society by Queen Caroline,[1] and in the very citadel of religious orthodoxy by Tindal, first showed that it had taken hold of the popular mind. His homely name, his homely calling, his homely style, did not make him a prophet in his own country; but he won the respect of Voltaire, and Hettner places him for logical clearness and strength far above nearly all contemporary deists.[2] Chubb's principal achievement is to have shown what a radical difference separates the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels, with his doctrine of unconditional forgiveness following on repentance, from the Pauline theology, with its mediatorial Christology.[3]

[1] 'A deist believing in a future state' is Chesterfield's account of her religion ('Characters,' appended to his Letters, p. 1406).

[2] 'Litteraturgeschichte,' Pt. I., p. 364.

[3] 'On the Equity and Reasonableness of the Divine Conduct in Pardoning Sinners upon their Repentance.' By Thomas Chubb. London. 1737. The

Thus rationalism as a criticism of the inner inconsistency of faith becomes for the time complete. Authority was first shaken by the disagreement between the traditional religions; then Rome and the Bible parted company; then came neo-Arians (or Socinians), differing fundamentally from Trinitarians in their interpretation of Scripture; then the New Testament was set at variance with the Old; then Christianity with Natural Religion; then, finally, the different parts of the New Testament with one another. If any advance was possible, it was likely to be made on other lines.

Before going on to fresh developments, it seems desirable, in deference to literary tradition, that I should say something about the part played by the celebrated Conyers Middleton in the movement whose course has here been briefly traced. The reputation of this writer, though great, is, like Butler's, almost exclusively English. Indeed, but for his 'Life of Cicero,' Middleton's name would be practically unknown on the Continent. Nor is the neglect to be wondered at, for, had he never lived, the history of rationalism would in all probability have been pretty much what it is now. However, he remains an interesting figure, serving to illustrate the trend of English thought a little before the middle of the eighteenth century. And he prefigures a type destined hereafter to become much more frequent, the type of the freethinking clerical college Don.

Whether or not the 'late Rev. and Learned Conyers Middleton D.D., Librarian of the University of Cambridge,' as he is called on the title-page of his 'Miscellaneous Writings,' had or had not advanced to a complete rejection of supernatural religion is a question of merely biographical interest. Very likely he had; but the fact was never admitted. In the deistic controversy he posed as a candid friend of both sides. Tindal is right in upholding the truth of natural religion independently of Christianity. And some of his strictures on the Old Testament are quite justifiable. The doctrine of plenary inspiration must be abandoned. Understood literally, the story of the Fall is absurd, and even immoral. Interpreted allegorically, however, it becomes remarkable and edifying, as some Fathers of

argument that 'analogy' may be used to prove any religion will be found on p. 35 of this tract.

the Church have shown. And the same may be said of other equivocal narratives in Genesis. At the same time, Tindal's attacks on the clergy are highly censurable, and, indeed, inconsistent with his own principles. By his own admission, what tends to promote happiness is good, nay, the only good; and that is just what the teaching of Christianity does. Nothing else offers such a near approach to natural religion, which, indeed, has never existed in its pure form as a popular creed. Socrates and Cicero did not interfere with the established worship of their time, and we should follow their example.[1] A believer would hardly have written in that blandly cynical tone.

Middleton's fame as a rationalist rests on a book directed against the credibility of the patristic miracles. The circumstances of its origin are curious. It is not, at least primarily, an insidious attack on the Gospel miracles, but a polemic defence of Protestantism in Chillingworth's sense against the pretensions of a High Church and Romanising section of the English clergy of his time. Some of these ecclesiastics, like their successors in our own day, had so far abandoned the traditions of Laud and Charles I. as to drop the title of Protestant, professing to call themselves Catholics without an adjective.[2] They had been greatly provoked by an earlier essay, in which Middleton, working on the materials collected during a visit to Rome, had tried to prove that the rites and ceremonies of modern Popery were copied from the superstitious observances of pagan antiquity. He replied to their complaints by going further and maintaining that the post-apostolic miracles of the first four centuries, till then accepted by many Protestant divines, were frauds or delusions. So dangerous did this thesis seem, that, in order to feel the pulse of religious opinion, he published the Introduction to his 'Free Inquiry' two years before venturing to bring out the work itself.

It came, after all, as a shock. The whole country was thrown into a ferment by the audacity of the Cambridge scholar, and for a time nothing else was talked of in literary circles. The

[1] 'A Letter to Dr. Waterland,' printed in Middleton's 'Miscellaneous Works,' Vol. III.

[2] Preface to 'Remarks and Observations' (Middleton's 'Miscellaneous Works,' Vol. II.).

clergy were generally opposed to his views, or at least to their public advocacy. To many, no doubt, it seemed as if his arguments against the patristic miracles might be turned with equal effect against the Gospel miracles. Nor were their fears without foundation. Middleton agrees with the deists in assuming that God's character has been largely revealed to us by the light of reason; and that certain stories may fairly be rejected without further examination as involving a gratuitous interference with the course of nature for purposes not reconcilable with the divine dignity. And in the 'Free Inquiry' many such stories are related only to be contemptuously dismissed on very much the same grounds that Woolston had brought to bear against the blasting of the barren fig-tree or the turning of water into wine.

But this was not all. In dealing with the question as a whole, in considering, that is to say, not only the abstract credibility of these patristic miracles, but also the particular character of the evidences on which they rested, Middleton brings into play a new element of criticism not available to Woolston. He canvasses the claims of the Fathers to our respect, and shows that their want of judgment and veracity was such as to deprive their testimony to supernatural events of all value whatever. And he also shows that the attestation of a martyr carries no particular weight, since martyrs are known to have been guilty of tampering with the truth when they thought that falsehood would redound to the credit of their faith. Here, no doubt, lay the real sting of the 'Free Inquiry.' That the early Church should be robbed of her supernatural powers seemed bad enough. It was still worse that her leading lights should not be distinguished by any extraordinary goodness or wisdom, but rather the reverse. Such a conclusion would be most unpalatable to all zealous churchmen, and particularly so to a body of ecclesiastics who, like the Anglican clergy, claimed to represent, more than any others, that primitive and uncorrupted communion. With many of these the alleged danger to the Gospel was probably a mere excuse. What they really resented was the derogation to the Church's honour. Nor would their animosity be diminished by the dexterity with which Middleton turned the argument from consequences to the advantage of rationalism. According to him, no precise date can be fixed after which well-attested

miraculous stories can consistently be rejected as frauds. Therefore 'popery' is entitled to the full benefit of their support, whatever that may be worth. Butler's method was beginning to exhibit its accommodating character. It was becoming evident that every argument for Christianity in the 'Analogy' told equally well or better as an argument for Rome.

A volume of essays published after his death showed that Middleton was prepared to criticise the Apostles and Evangelists as fearlessly as he had criticised the Fathers. Peter and Paul were both capable on occasions of dissembling their dearest convictions. The Gospels exhibit irreconcilable discrepancies, proving their authors to have been uninspired and fallible, though honest historians. The gift of tongues did not imply a permanent mastery of foreign languages, and the New Testament is written in very bad Greek.[1] More than a century was to elapse before an English clergyman could again express such opinions with impunity.

Middleton is better known as a classical scholar than as a theologian. But there is an intimate connexion between his studies in both departments. Macaulay, indeed, has affected to discover a striking contrast between the tone of the 'Free Inquiry' and the tone of the 'Life of Cicero,' and has worked it up into one of his superficial antitheses. 'This most ingenious and learned man,' he tells us, 'had a superstition of his own. The great *Avvocato del Diavolo,* while he disputed, with no small ability, the claims of Cyprian and Athanasius to a place in the Calendar, was himself composing a lying legend in honour of St. Tully'—with a good deal more to the same effect. Idolatry of genius is made responsible for this supposed aberration of judgment. But what Middleton had at heart was rather a principle than a person—the principle for which he always fought. He loved and defended Cicero as the representative of humanity, enlightenment, and reason; if he disputed the claims of the Fathers to our unqualified veneration, it was because they stood for superstition, falsehood, and inhuman asceticism. And his idolatry, if such it must be called, for the author of the 'De Divinatione' and the 'De Natura Deorum,' was not peculiar to himself; he shared it with the whole rationalistic school; nor has anything but a deeper knowledge of the Greek masters

[1] 'Miscellaneous Works,' Vol. II., pp. 255–414.

made this once widely spread feeling so much of a historical curiosity to ourselves.

Now that the chief representatives of English deism have been passed in review, it seems advisable, before proceeding further, to sum up the distinguishing characteristics of the movement considered as a whole. What strikes one first of all in this connexion is the extraordinary freedom of thought and speech enjoyed by Englishmen during the first half of the eighteenth century. There had been nothing like it on so great a scale since the age of the Antonines. Except in Holland, there was nothing like it on the European Continent till many years afterwards. Even in England it was subsequently lost during a considerable period, and only within living memory regained. Woolston, as we have seen, suffered imprisonment; but the penalty was brought on him by his own recklessness, and seems to have been of the lightest. On a previous occasion, if Woolston is to be trusted, the Archbishop of Canterbury expressed to him in private his disapproval of all such prosecutions for opinion; and Dr. Clarke, the celebrated theologian, tried to obtain his liberation.[1] Another deist, Peter Annet, was not only imprisoned, but pilloried; but this was in 1763, when the reaction had already begun; and Annet had made himself particularly obnoxious by the violence of his attacks on Christianity. At the close of his life he is said to have applied for, and to have received, assistance from Archbishop Secker;[2] and, whether true or not, the story is good evidence for the spirit of toleration then prevailing in high quarters.

We have next to observe that the leading freethinkers were born and brought up, not in the eighteenth century, but in the seventeenth. Tindal was born in 1656, Toland in 1670, Bolingbroke in 1672, Collins in 1676, Shaftesbury and Chubb in 1679, Middleton in 1683. Thus they were the children, not of calm, but of storm, of an unsettled and revolutionary period, a period also fertile in great intellectual achievements. Those years gave the world a new calculus, a new astronomy and physics, a new psychology, a new system of government, a new and more brilliant strategy.

[1] 'Life of Woolston,' pp. 12 and 18.
[2] Lechler, 'Geschichte des Deismus,' p. 322.

At the same time deism was itself neither revolutionary nor new. It simply marked one more stage in an orderly evolution, advancing step by step from the first Reformers to the latitudinarian divines, from these to the crypto-Arianism of Milton, Locke, and Newton, the outspoken Arianism of Whiston, and finally to the religion of nature, each of these claiming to represent a more primitive belief than its predecessor, just as the new Parliamentary government claimed, and not without truth, to be a restoration of ancient English liberty. Thus deism admirably fulfilled the requirements of a people who in the midst of revolutions still remained conservative and cautious.

More than this, though essentially rationalistic, though exhibiting the destructive action of reason on religious belief with more self-confidence, more continuity, more concerted effort, and over a wider social area than had ever before been reached, deism gave European thought what it had not yet acquired, a positive centre, a rallying-point for the great revolt against supernatural religion which had long been in preparation, but which had so far remained without seriousness, cohesion, and lucidity. France had long been fermenting, to a higher degree even than England, with freethought;[1] but the equivocal name of libertinism betrayed its association with free-living; and the inability of its professors to advance beyond mere negation is well illustrated by the meagre creed of Molière's Don Juan, that 'two and two make four.' Bayle's Dictionary, with its curious mixture of scandalous anecdotes, miscellaneous erudition, and despairing scepticism, illustrates, without really enlarging, the libertine point of view. English deism supplied just the small nucleus which Continental thought needed before it could crystallise into a solid mass. And the process was powerfully aided by the classical traditions, still more tenacious in France than in England—thanks partly to Jesuit teaching—which clustered round the magnetic name of Cicero.

Historians often speak as if the deistic movement proved a failure in the land of its birth. Failure, no doubt, there was: but whether the movement failed in England or England in the movement is another question. The first

[1] F. T. Perrens, 'Les Libertins en France au XVIIième Siècle' (Paris, 1899).

generation of freethinkers left no successors; and during a lapse of fifty years no rationalist of any originality was born on English soil. Even in their palmiest days the naturalist school found themselves opposed by nearly the whole intellect of the country; while the few men of eminence who sympathised with them observed a cautious silence. Far different was the distribution of forces abroad; far different in England itself at a later epoch. But, as has already been pointed out, this hostility went along with a general indifference to or incapacity for the higher reason as manifested in philosophy, science, history, and the better sort of criticism. By 1739 interest in philosophy had sunk so low among a people once famous for their deep thinking[1] that Hume's 'Treatise on Human Nature,' perhaps the greatest work of its kind ever written by a native of these islands, 'fell dead-born from the press'; and at a later period its author complained bitterly of the stupidity of English society. England could only regain her lost intellectual position by contact with countries where speculation had been kindled by the study of her own literature and science—Scotland, France, and Germany.

The single-minded, almost fanatical enthusiasm with which the deists devoted themselves to attacks on Revelation and to the inculcation of natural religion is unique in history. As a consequence of this sectarian attitude, they lived on the creed they criticised and shared the decline of its vitality. Their position, in fact, very much resembled that of the hero of one of Hauff's fairy tales, who has always as much money in his pockets as the gamester against whom he habitually plays, and consequently finds himself penniless at the moment of complete success. Rationalism could make no further progress until it became associated with the general interests of advancing knowledge, with the enjoyment of beauty, with the cause of suffering humanity. The exercise of reason had to be legitimated by positive conquests before it was extended to every sphere of mental activity.

Not that the isolation of freethought had ever been complete even in England. At the very beginning of the movement Shaftesbury had contributed largely to its credit by combining high culture with a criticism of theology rather implied than

[1] 'Les Anglais pensent profondément' (La Fontaine).

direct. It acquired a certain reflected lustre from the poetry of Pope, and a more doubtful distinction from the versatile accomplishments of Bolingbroke. Finally, it won the co-operation, though but for a strictly limited purpose, of Middleton's classical scholarship and eminent controversial ability. Their support, no doubt, told for what it was worth. But such gleams of patronage were only faint announcements of the formidable alliances which were soon to take the field.

Apart from its intellectual influence on Scotland and the Continent, English deism is not generally credited with any positive action on civilisation, or, if any, it is merely with having contributed more or less to the public and private demoralisation of the times—an accusation brought against rationalism wherever it gains a considerable following, and one which may more profitably be considered when societies where religious belief remains unshaken are shown to be distinguished by their superior purity. A much more probable result of the movement may be found, first, in the permanent establishment of toleration for Dissent in England, and then in the victory, for a long period, of rational religion within the orthodox communions, together with the formation of that most valuable body, the Unitarians. These, as is well known, represent the English Presbyterians of the Stuart period, driven out of the Church by the Act of Conformity, and left free to determine their own destiny, unfettered by articles or creeds. How far such a degree of religious liberty would have been enjoyed had not Collins and others raised a timely protest against the reactionary tendencies under Queen Anne may well be doubted.

But still greater services than these remain to be recorded. Under George II. we hear about one of those Romeward tendencies which seem to be a recurring phenomenon in English history.[1] In the Stuart period a similar movement was met and overcome by the Latitudinarians. Within our own memory, as will hereafter be shown, a similar but more

[1] See the references to Middleton given above. An 'alarm about the increase of Popery which prevailed about the end of the year 1734' (1735 N.S.) induced Neal, the historian of Puritanism, and other eminent Dissenting ministers to preach against the errors of Rome (Toulmin's 'Life of Neal,' prefixed to his edition of the History, p. xxiv. in the reprint of 1822).

formidable movement has been met and overcome by modern rationalism. And if there really was something like it in the age of Queen Caroline, we may fairly infer that it was met and overcome by arguments which cut the ground from under all appeals to authority or to superstitious terror.

Finally, among results due to the spread of rationalism, we have to reckon the conquest of India. This was facilitated, or perhaps only made possible, by what a modern historian calls 'the religious indifference' of the conquerors, who extended a boundless toleration to every variety of Hindoo faith, offering in this respect a marked contrast to the Portuguese settlers, who carried their Inquisition with them into the East.[1] Such a policy must, to say the least of it, have been suggested and encouraged by the lessons of Collins and Tindal. And so strongly did the tradition of indifference become established, that the fanatical demand for a more active propagation of Christianity, raised at the time of the Sepoy Mutiny, found no response among the governing classes of England.[2]

Still these services, although great, were, what the creed of the freethinkers passed for being, purely negative, and therefore failed to raise their cause in public estimation. Although nobody seemed disposed to controvert Tindal's assertion that society had not improved since the days of Tiberius, there was a general feeling, shared by some of the deists themselves, that in the absence of supernatural restraints it would become much worse. As to the investigation of truth for its own sake, it had at that time lost all interest for the English mind. Instead of 'musing, searching, revolving new notions and new ideas,' it was musing, searching, revolving new sources of profit or of pelf.

Elsewhere the case was different. In Scotland, France, and Germany the liveliest intellectual curiosity had been awakened, and there was the strongest desire to carry the methods of the previous century into new fields of enquiry, or to use them for the furtherance of human happiness. There was, indeed, more room for such generous efforts among our neighbours than among ourselves. In France arbitrary power and religious fanaticism had within recent memory made themselves jointly

[1] Goldwin Smith, 'The United Kingdom,' Vol. II., p. 412.

[2] The Mutiny itself is said to have been partly provoked by the injudicious propagandism of Evangelical officers.

responsible for one of the most barbarous acts of persecution ever recorded in history; besides which, from the long and intimate connexion existing between the French monarchy and the Roman Catholic Church, Christianity had to bear the blame for every abuse in the administration of the most Christian king. Neither in Scotland nor in Germany were such abuses known, or, if known, they were not resented, or, if resented, not associated with a false religion. But the gloomy tyranny of the Kirk did not endear its creed to educated Scotchmen, nor did the sanctimonious hypocrisy of all classes recommend it any more to their favour; while in Germany the great Pietistic movement, very useful at first as a solvent of the rigid lifeless old Lutheran orthodoxy, was itself degenerating into a sour and narrow-minded asceticism, capable, as appeared in the expulsion of Wolf from Halle, of reviving the old intolerance in a particularly mean and spiteful form.[1]

On the mass of combustible materials so prepared in the surrounding countries, the fire of English rationalism, deprived of air and fuel in its first home, fell and spread with an impulse quickened by the very causes which in this country opposed themselves to its continued propagation. While the weight of English intellect had been thrown against infidelity in England, abroad it was thrown into the same scale. The discoveries of a Newton and a Locke, the charm of an Addison, the power of a Swift, the dazzling paradoxes of a Berkeley, gave additional prestige to every doctrine emanating from the world's great centre of illumination; and so far from being a quantity subtracted from the persuasiveness of the deistic movement, they became co-efficients to its energy of expansion. And that immunity from the evils of religious discord, of persecution, of superstition, and of asceticism, which made the demand for freedom of enquiry seem superfluous or impertinent to the countrymen of Collins and Tindal, excited the emulous admiration of less fortunate communities, kindling a desire to naturalise among themselves the same hardihood of criticism, the same subjection of all creeds and all institutions, whatever their origin, whatever their age, whatever their diffusion, whatever their authority, to the one universally applicable standard of reason.

[1] Zeller's 'Vorträge und Abhandlungen,' I., 6.

CHAPTER IV

RATIONALISM IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

WHAT the English deists had left undone in the way of negative criticism was speedily completed by their immediate successors, among whom we at once encounter the two greatest names in the history of rationalism, Voltaire and Hume. No other assailants have so successfully applied reason to the destruction of religious belief. No others have exercised so profound an influence on public opinion, Voltaire on the opinion of the masses, Hume on the opinion of the *élite*. The one practically put an end to persecution, the other theoretically put an end to dogmatism. A great rationalist of our own time has observed that Voltaire did more for humanity than all the Fathers of the Church put together. He might have added, with at least equal truth, that Hume did more for thought than all the Schoolmen put together.

In personal character the two offered a signal contrast, on which this is not the place to dilate. Let it suffice to say that the one was as distinguished for his fiery restlessness as the other for his steady and even stolid placidity; and that if in Voltaire this restlessness went with vices from which Hume was wholly free, it also went with virtues to which Hume made no approach. It is more interesting to note the essential reasonableness which distinguished both in life as well as in thought. In Hume's case this is too notorious to need illustration. In Voltaire's case it seems a paradox, but a paradox which will be much attenuated if we understand by reasonableness, not the limitation of our desires, but the setting before ourselves of ideals which may be and are fulfilled. Voltaire's ideals may not have been the highest, but they were fulfilled. He sought for wealth, for fame, for power, and they were given

him in the amplest measure. If he did not succeed in destroying Christianity, he did more towards turning it into a religion of humanity than any other man has ever done or can ever hope to do.

The thing that he most hated and that he primarily wished to overthrow was Catholicism, and he struck at this through its Scriptural foundation. A notion has long been sedulously propagated among ourselves that attacks on Christianity, as commonly understood in Protestant countries, and more particularly attacks on Biblical authority, leave the position of the Roman Catholic Church untouched. It is built, we are told, on other foundations, and commands more summary methods of conviction than are supplied by a laborious sifting and comparison of Scriptural texts. Recent utterances of the Roman hierarchy hardly go to confirm this belief; nor is it countenanced, I believe, by Roman Catholic theologians. At any rate, it receives no support from Voltaire, who ought to have known something about the matter, having been brought up by the Jesuits, one of whom, by the way, predicted his future apostasy. Cicero and Bayle would probably, in any circumstances, have made him a freethinker; but in point of fact his attacks on Christianity were conducted on the lines of English rationalism, with which he had become familiarised in the course of a long residence in England. He also accepted the positive deism of his English masters, basing it, in common with nearly all his contemporaries, on the argument from final causes, together with the ophelistic argument that morality needs the sanction of belief in a divine providence; though how he reconciled this theology with his absolute rejection of miracles, his cynical pessimism, his doubts about a future life, and his final adherence to determinism, does not appear. A remunerating and avenging Deity who rigidly abstains from interfering with the action of second causes, and who cannot in justice requite the soul—if there be a soul—for deeds performed when in the body by his own decree, seems to offer uncertain securities for the good behaviour of his devotees.

But if Voltaire was weak and incoherent in construction, as a negative critic he had the art of making all the resources at his disposal tell to the utmost of their value. The desultory attacks of his English predecessors are with him organised into

one vast plan of campaign, clear, complete, and systematic. Agile, well equipped, but without an ounce of superfluous accoutrements, his troops are flung again and again in swarming masses on the citadels of faith, and reinforced from inexhaustible reserves. All science, all history, all contemporary life, are pressed into the service. Morality, philosophy, public order, and even public decency, are arrayed against revealed religion. Poetry, epic, dramatic, and lyric, contributes fanfaronades of military music; while some gay and sparkling story at once leads on, refreshes, and cheers the assailants, as French storming columns advance against a battery with their *vivandière* riding at their head.[1]

Voltaire was everything, even original. Not only does he bring together with irresistible effect all the arguments current at his time that go to prove the late date of the Pentateuch, but he adds to them another of his own discovery. I refer to the now famous passage where Amos declares, as a well-known fact, that sacrifices to Iahveh were not offered by Israel in the wilderness. This, which now supplies the Higher Criticism with one of its strongest proofs of the late date of the Levitical Code, is, as Professor James Darmesteter has pointed out, first cited for that purpose in a work attributed by Voltaire to Lord Bolingbroke, but really written by himself and published in 1767.[2] Here and elsewhere we observe the note of a genuine historian who, even if inaccurate and superficial, had acquired the art of weighing evidence and of bringing apparently remote facts into mutual relation.

The same remark applies to Hume. So high does the reputation as an original thinker of that great writer now stand, that his merits as a historian are either forgotten or remembered only to be vilified. In the admirable volume on Hume contributed by Professor Huxley to the series of 'English Men of Letters,' not a single word of criticism is vouchsafed to his 'History of England,' even considered as a literary composition. And it may be that the work in question deserves all the hard things that have been said of it by Freeman and others. Nevertheless, it remains true that no philosopher since Aristotle has

[1] Hamley's 'War in the Crimea,' p. 251.

[2] 'Examen Important de Milord Bolingbroke,' Chap. V., note; Amos, v. 25–6.

been so well read in history as Hume, nor any so well qualified to bring his historical studies into fruitful relation with the sciences of human nature.

This appears especially in Hume's solitary contribution to the criticism of revealed religion, the famous 'Essay on Miracles,' published in 1748. In it the question is for the first time treated as a whole, and treated purely as a matter of experience. Previous discussions had either concerned themselves with the probability of particular occurrences, like the essays of Woolston and Middleton, or had involved certain assumptions about the divine attributes, as with Spinoza and Butler. Hume takes in the whole range of history, ancient and modern, but he assumes nothing, knows nothing about God. The very business of miracles, if such occurrences there be, is to tell us something we did not know before and could not have known without their aid about the supernatural world. Now, experience makes us acquainted with a natural order, unbroken except by the alleged miraculous exceptions. In the recorded cases we believe them, if at all, on human testimony. But experience shows that such testimony may be fallacious, and that it is particularly liable to error where the witnesses believe themselves to be reporting supernatural events. And experience also shows that the general judgment of mankind agrees in this depreciatory estimate of testimony to miracles. For those reported as having been wrought in confirmation of incredible doctrines are themselves summarily dismissed as incredible. On this point Hume could appeal to very recent experience. He had the advantage of some years' residence in France, a country still exposed to such performances. Jansenists and Jesuits could both quote signs and wonders in attestation of their respective pretensions, and neither party would take the other's evidence as trustworthy; while Protestants extended an equal scepticism to both. Similarly all religions have their miracles, and none find credence outside the limits of the communion whose teaching they support. Thus Hume has the majority of mankind with him in refusing to believe a miracle on any evidence that may be produced on its behalf. It is always more probable that the witnesses were deceived than that the alleged violation of natural order occurred.

We must observe that for an event to be inexplicable does

not necessarily make it a miracle. It must, in Hume's words, be a transgression of a law of nature by 'a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of an invisible agent.'[1] And from a rationalistic point of view the definition is adequate; for only as such does the alleged miracle possess evidentiary value. Let us suppose that the persons who were cured of various diseases at the tomb of the Abbé Paris were simply hysterical patients, and that they were cured by suggestion. In that case the credit of the witnesses would be partially saved, but the supposed supernatural testimony to the orthodoxy of Jansenism would disappear. I say that the credit of the witnesses would be partially saved, for they would still be deceived to the extent of mistaking the nature of the disease. And that is all that Hume's argument requires. His statement of it may be too strong, but substantially it remains unshaken.

It has been objected that for Hume to talk about 'laws of nature' was inconsistent with his sceptical, phenomenist philosophy. That is a purely personal question, the decision of which leaves the argument from relative probabilities unaffected. Indeed, as a contribution to rationalism, Hume's 'Essay' gains in value by not being mixed up with his philosophy, whatever that may be worth. In this respect he has a great advantage over Spinoza, the typical rationalist of the seventeenth century. Spinoza said that miracles were impossible; and so they would be if his philosophy were true, for then there would be no agent capable of performing them. But it is open to an apologist to reply that he does not agree with Spinoza; and, indeed, no one can agree with him without ceasing to be a Christian.

The denial of a personal God under any form, Spinoza's or another's, includes the denial of miracles as the greater includes the less. On the other hand, a deist of Tindal's school is not debarred by the creed of natural religion from adopting Hume's position. Assuming that God might, if he pleased, interfere with the course of nature, experience shows that as a rule he does not so please, and therefore it establishes the *a priori* probability against miracles, denied by Butler.

[1] 'Essays,' Vol. II., p. 93.

Whether Hume himself did or did not belong to that school is still a moot point. But he certainly attacks natural religion with a vigour never before displayed in theological controversy; and his writings on the subject constitute his most important contribution to rationalistic literature.

Here, again, we must abstract from the personal question. Whether Hume had or had not any religious belief is a problem which may interest his biographer: it does not interest us. He gives us to understand over and over again that he is a theist. But, then, all the freethinkers professed to be Christians, and for that matter Hume himself calls Christianity 'our religion.' In point of fact he gives the antitheistic speaker in his Dialogues the best of the argument, and behind his arguments we have no business to go. It matters nothing if the authority even of so great a man was thrown against their conclusiveness, for we have to deal, not with authority, but with reason; or, if opinions as such are to have any importance, we have to do less with Hume than with his followers, and they took the antitheistic side.

Like all the great masters of dialectic, Hume, so far as possible, takes common ground with his opponents. He had pursued this course in his 'Essay on Miracles,' he pursues it again in his still more wonderful writings on natural religion. Since reasoning on the subject first began, most persons, when they felt bound to give a reason for believing in the existence of a personal God, have assumed that there must be an intelligent cause of the world. Now, to those who accept Hume's analysis of causation such an assumption is fallacious. Our only guide is experience, and experience only tells us that within the world every change is preceded by another change. As to the world itself, we know and can know nothing about a time when it did not exist; we have, therefore, no right to dogmatise about the mode of its production. But when Hume is writing about natural religion, he accepts, without analysis, the ordinary notion of causation, insisting only on a rigid adherence to experience in its application. Applying this principle to theology, he argues that, granting the world to have been created by a designing intelligence, we are not justified in ascribing any intentions to its creator other than what are actually realised in the visible constitution of things. If nature

and history testify to a certain degree of justice and beneficence in the distribution of pleasure and pain, then we may, to that extent, credit the author of nature with justice and beneficence, but only to that extent and no more. If on examination inequalities of fortune, irreconcilable with our notions of morality, should reveal themselves, we have no right to infer that God's original intentions have been frustrated, to imagine that the present order of things was preceded by a golden age, or that it will be followed by another dispensation where what we consider perfect justice shall prevail. By such reasoning we should 'have certainly added something to the attributes of the cause beyond what appears in the effect.'[1] The flimsy edifices of the Christian apologist and of his deistic opponent come down together like a house of cards at a single push.

But this whole theory of a creative intelligence must be abandoned as gratuitous. It rests almost entirely on final causes, on what is known as the argument from design. Here Voltaire agrees with Butler, and both with the German disciples of Wolf. The structure of organised bodies shows, it is alleged, an adaptation of means to ends surpassing the most exquisite workmanship of human skill, and must therefore have proceeded from a more than human intelligence. Hume does not dispute the premiss, but he denies the inference. In order to the construction of a material system consisting of parts with mutually related uses, it is not enough, as he points out, to assume a mind of absolute simplicity. The complexity of the cause must equal the complexity of the effect. The mechanical system presupposes a system of ideas related to one another and exhibiting marks of design to precisely the same extent. But 'a mental world or universe of ideas requires a cause as much as does a material world, or universe of objects; and, if similar in arrangement, must require a similar cause;'[2] and so on *ad infinitum*. If we stop anywhere, 'why not stop at the material world,' and credit it with a spontaneous power of self-adjustment to immanent ends? The method of the teleologists is no better than that of the Indian sage with his elephant and tortoise, or the peripatetic explanation of the

[1] 'Essays,' Vol. II., p. 115.

[2] 'A Treatise on Human Nature and Dialogues concerning Natural Religion,' Vol. II., p. 407.

action of bodies by their occult qualities.[1] As Hume had destroyed the religious idea of an ultimate purpose in nature by arguing that causes must not be assumed to exceed their effects, so conversely he destroys the religious idea of a creator by arguing that causes must be assumed to equal their effects.

Teleology is the most popular but not the sole foundation of theistic philosophy. Plato, Aristotle, and the Schoolmen had inferred the existence of God from the fact that matter moves, combined with the supposed inability of matter to move itself. It must then have been set going in the first instance by mind. But since their time modern science had intervened, and on the strength of its discoveries Hume urges that motion may conceivably have been started by the original forces of matter just as well as by mind; or, as an alternative, that 'motion may have been propagated by impulse through all eternity, and the same stock of it, or nearly the same (*sic*), be still upheld in the universe.'[2] As to the order of nature, it is permanent because it is stable; whereas a disorderly arrangement is bound by its very instability to fall to pieces, making way for another and another, until at length a position of stable equilibrium—to use language more modern than Hume's—has been attained.

Here we have under its most general expression the doctrine of which the survival of the fittest in biology is only a particular case. It seems to have been borrowed by Hume from the 'Lettres sur les Aveugles' of his illustrious contemporary, Diderot; and as employed by Diderot it may be more appropriately called a reminiscence of Greek philosophy than an anticipation of Darwin.

Another theistic argument is derived from what is called in scholastic language the contingency of the world. A chain of finite causes and effects cannot be conceived except as originating in that which necessarily exists, which has the reason of its existence in itself, and cannot be conceived as non-existing. Now, this necessary Being is what we call God. Hume replies, first, that the whole idea of a necessarily existent Being is fictitious,—for whatever can be conceived as existing can equally be conceived as non-existing; and, secondly, that, granting the alleged necessity, matter may, for anything we

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 408-9. [2] P. 426.

know to the contrary, have a reason for its existence in itself.[1] Hume does not seem to have been acquainted with Spinoza; otherwise he might have quoted that philosopher's system to show how readily the ontological argument lends itself to the denial of a personal God—a truth still more fully exemplified in the next century by the far subtler dialectic of Hegel.

Finally, Hume enters at length on the sentimental grounds of religious belief, the helpless longing for an ideal source of justice and love amid the hardships and miseries of our present life.[2] But as against these he has merely to repeat his old principle, that from an imperfect effect a perfect cause cannot necessarily be inferred.[3] The moral argument for theism, the interpretation of conscience as a direct self-revelation of God to the soul, had apparently not yet been put forward, or had been forgotten when he wrote. But we can tell from his 'Moral Essays' how he would have dealt with it. Conscience, we can imagine him saying, is not a supernatural revelation, but a natural growth, an instinctive feeling of sympathy or antipathy towards certain classes of actions or sentiments, generated in the individual by accumulated experiences of their utility or of their danger to the race.

Berkeley was Hume's master in metaphysics; and it is rather remarkable that his new argument for theism, derived from the idealistic theory of human knowledge, should nowhere be mentioned in the 'Dialogues concerning Natural Religion.' Apparently neither theologians nor their opponents had begun to take it seriously. At any rate, Hume's own philosophy supplies the answer. To refute Berkeley we need only push his method a little further. If a material substratum for phenomena be a gratuitous assumption, so also is a spiritual substratum. Experience is silent, and equally silent, about both. Phenomena, or, as Berkeley and Hume call them, ideas, fall into natural classes, and are determined in their occurrence by natural laws. Anything else, call it substance or what you will, is a fiction, less amusing than the novels avowedly put forward as such.

After destroying the logical foundations of religious belief, Hume undermines its authority by studying it as a natural

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 431 *sqq.* [2] P. 435. [3] P. 441.

growth. In opposition alike to freethinkers and orthodox believers he represents spiritualistic monotheism as the outcome of a gradual development, beginning with low forms of idolatry and rooted in the tendency to animate material objects with human life and consciousness. After long holding the field, this theory has in the last half-century been violently attacked from various quarters, but no satisfactory substitute has yet been agreed on, and the general principle on which it rests seems again to be finding favour with scientific mythologists.

With Hume's 'Essay on Miracles' and his 'Dialogues on Natural Religion' the high-water mark of rationalism was reached in the eighteenth century, as it had been reached in the seventeenth with Spinoza's 'Tractatus Theologico-Politicus' and his 'Ethica'; nor has it since been carried any further on lines of abstract thought. Historical criticism on the one hand and physical science on the other have contributed an enormous amount of detailed verification, but have not in any respect enlarged the scope of Hume's abstract reasonings. Being, however, not merely abstract but also purely sceptical or negative, and out of relation to practical interests, his anti-theistic arguments seem to have done less execution than might have been expected from their author's great philosophical reputation and the singular charm of his style. Like all such publications, the 'Dialogues' must also have suffered by not appearing during their author's life. It is a striking instance of the power exercised by personal authority that arguments should count for less because the intellect to which we owe them is extinct; yet most people will, I think, find on self-examination that the death even of a favourite writer involves a measurable depreciation in his hold on their allegiance. However this may be, it is certain that the contemporary atheistic materialism of France and Germany,[1] though set forth with incomparably less literary and dialectical ability, acted far more powerfully on public opinion than Hume's criticism. That rationalism should be popularly identified with materialism shows, indeed, how much materialism has contributed to its diffusion. The doctrine that mind was evolved from the interplay of molecular forces and that we think with our brains

[1] I include Germany on account of D'Holbach, who was a German.

may not be logically defensible; but to the vulgar it seems much more conceivable than any form of idealism, and it appeals to their standard of evidence through the support it seems to receive from what they call hard facts. With the French Encyclopaedists it took over the part played by the equally plausible and popular creed of deism among the earlier school of freethinkers, and, like that, represented the resumption of an old classical tradition in violent reaction against the established Oriental religion rather than any influence derived from modern science. Its adherents drew on Epicurus and Lucretius as their predecessors had drawn on the Stoics and Cicero.

Historically, the revival of materialism was nearly contemporary with the revival of natural religion, having been begun by Gassendi in France and Hobbes in England; though neither of those philosophers carried it, at least openly, to the length of atheism. Checked for a time by the predominance of the Cartesians, with their supposed demonstration of the soul as a separate spiritual substance, it received new strength from the subsequent ascendency of Locke and his school. Locke himself saw no reason for doubting that God could, if he pleased, endow matter with the power to think; and his derivation of all knowledge from the simple sensations and their combinations seemed to point in that direction. True, the most elementary feeling can no more be explained by the movements of the bodily organs than can the most refined and complicated act of reasoning; while the association with nervous action is probably not less intimate in the latter than in the former manifestation of mind. Still, the fact remains that sensation is common to us with the lower animals, while reason and all that depends on it is supposed to be peculiar to ourselves; and this distinction seems to be imperilled by a psychology whose object is to break down the old line of demarcation between the two. It will be called materialism, however much its adherents may protest against the name. And as theologians only object to materialism in so far as it excludes immortality, their impatience of idealistic subtleties is quite intelligible. Their inaccuracy becomes less inexcusable when they take advantage of the confusion between sensationalism and sensualism, or between materialism in philosophy and materialism in life, to

insinuate that their opponents encourage a predilection for vulgar and vicious enjoyments.

In France materialism became the reigning doctrine among the majority of those whose primary object was political and social reform. They believed that in advocating it they were advocating the truth: but for truth in the abstract they had little enthusiasm. In attacking spiritualism they attacked religion, and in attacking religion they attacked both the intolerance for which it was directly responsible and the political abuses which it indirectly fostered. Hume, on the other hand, was in politics a Tory; and although no friend to abuses, his alienation from the popular cause, which the experience of the civil wars led him to associate with religious fanaticism, did not recommend his agnostic rationalism to the revolutionary party; while his absolutist friends would be debarred from accepting it, at least openly, by their traditional alliance with the Church. Nevertheless, it was from the future chiefs of English radicalism that his reputation with posterity was to come; and the triumphant reception given him by the leaders of advanced thought in Paris showed a just appreciation of the consequences to which, whatever might be their superficial aspect, his speculations would eventually lead.

The name of Gibbon is constantly and justly associated with that of Hume in the history of rationalism. Although born and bred in England, the Roman historian was hardly more of an Englishman than the Scotch philosopher, and, like him, stands quite outside the English movement of thought, his affinities being rather with the French school. The best part of his mental training was received at Lausanne, virtually a French city, and his first intention was to write his great work in the French language. Moreover, his intense interest in theological and ecclesiastical questions, though primarily an outgrowth of the old English tradition, would probably have withered amid the general indifference of English public opinion to such topics after 1750, had it not been sustained and stimulated by the intellectual climate in which his later years were spent.

Gibbon's contribution to rationalism, thorough and solid so far as it goes, ranks far below Hume's in weight. His famous

fifteenth and sixteenth chapters are in substance a reply to the apologetic contention that the conquest of the Roman empire by Christianity was itself a miracle, an event only to be explained by supernatural intervention. Gibbon showed that this revolution could be sufficiently accounted for by the unaided operation of natural causes. More particularly he proved that the obstacles to its achievement had been enormously exaggerated in a controversial interest. Before Diocletian the persecutions were very partial in their incidence; and at no time was the number of martyrs great.[1] At last the new religion was forcibly imposed on the empire by a small minority, to whom Constantine and his successors gave, for political reasons, a somewhat compromising support.

To say that such arguments do not account for the first origin of Christianity would be irrelevant. That was not the historian's problem; and he might have observed that the materials for solving it did not exist. The unexplained is not necessarily identical with the inexplicable, nor the inexplicable with the supernatural. Otherwise we should soon be overburdened with miracles, not always to the advantage of any one system of theology. Within the limits assigned by himself, Gibbon, if he has not exhausted the subject, has at any rate made a good beginning; and the effect of subsequent enquiry has been to strengthen the naturalistic case—so much so, indeed, that the difficulty is not now to explain the ultimate success of Christianity, but to explain why its success was so long delayed.

D'Holbach's 'System of Nature,' the most complete compendium of atheistic materialism ever written, appeared in 1770, twenty years after the composition of Hume's 'Dialogues,' which, however, did not see the light until 1776, the year of his death. But in the mean time a formidable counter-movement had already begun. That great theological revival which signalised the first decades of the nineteenth century all over Western Europe is generally ascribed to a violent reaction against the excesses of the French Revolution and the subversive opinions vulgarly supposed to have produced them. But the Revolution only served to quicken a movement which

[1] This estimate has since been confirmed by Friedländer.

had begun long before, and which was rapidly approaching its maturity when the States General were convoked. Like the Romanticism with which it afterwards became intimately associated, the religious reaction had its roots far back in the eighteenth century. In common with other outbreaks of a similar character before and after it, this movement does not primarily indicate a change of opinion among the leaders of thought, but an increased prominence given to the ideas of the people, of those who live by petty commerce and manual labour, that is of the most numerous, the most unjustly treated, the most enthusiastic, the most unreasoning, and the most ignorant section of the community. The psychology of this class can be better studied, before the Revolution, in England than in any other European country. We find them cheering for Sacheverell under Queen Anne, driving Walpole against his better judgment into an impolitic war with Spain, falling into convulsions round Wesley's pulpit, shrieking for Byng's execution, equally ardent in their worship of Chatham and of Wilkes, turning London into a pandemonium as a protest against the partial repeal of Catholic disabilities, and burning Priestley's books and scientific instruments, at about the same time when the chosen representatives of their French brethren were sending Lavoisier to the guillotine. Perhaps the reputation for ferocity enjoyed by our countrymen at that time among the other nations of Europe arose, at least in part, from the greater liberty allowed to the populace in England. The events of the Revolution proved that much greater ferocity could be displayed by the same class in France when it once got out of hand.

Along with this increasing influence of the people there was coming into play the influence of another class, still more noted for the strength of its so-called religious instincts, that is, the whole female sex. The prominence given to ideals of gentleness and affectionate domesticity all through the eighteenth century, whether related to it as cause or effect, proves that women were coming to count for much more than in the days of Shakespeare and Milton, when, to judge from repeated utterances of those poets, the general estimate of their capacities stood at the lowest point it has ever fallen to in the civilised world. Freethought unquestionably made many converts among women—not always, if contemporary novelists may be trusted,

to the benefit of their morals: but taking them as a body, their permanent relations with children present a sufficient guarantee for the steadiness of their religious beliefs.

Now, by a singular coincidence, it happened that the greatest writer of the third quarter of the century was in close touch with both these classes. Rousseau sprang from the people, and sympathised with the people through life. He had also associated very intimately with women, and entered into their sentiments more deeply than any of his contemporaries, as they in turn were ardently devoted to him. True, he was no feminist in the modern sense, and his estimate of their position in reference to men is depreciatory;[1] but the passive part assigned to them in his ideal community would suggest anything rather than a relaxation of the religious sanction.

At the same time, Rousseau was no mere eloquent sentimentalist. The strength of his logical understanding was on a level with his declamatory power: his command of the dialectical weapons is not less remarkable than his mastery of human passion. Thus, while calling himself a Christian,[2] he professes Christianity under a rationalised form, without original sin and without miracles. Indeed, personally, he provoked clerical hostility to a much greater extent, and with consequences far more disastrous to himself, than his more freethinking contemporaries. But this very fact suggests that the Catholic bishops and Protestant pastors who hounded him from one retreat to another, saw and dreaded in the author of the 'Emile' what the Encyclopaedists were not—a rival religious teacher. And such in truth Rousseau is entitled to be called. His position first marks the distinction, since become familiar, between Theism and Deism.

The name of deist, though cherished by Shaftesbury for its positive meaning, had in practice come to connote the mere rejection of revealed religion, so that the common phrase, a deist *and* an atheist, could be used without any consciousness of absurdity. Theist, on the other hand, emphasises the belief in a personal God—that at least, if no more. And the name at once classes those who bear it with more orthodox believers, as against agnostics, pantheists, and atheists. To put the

[1] See the part about Sophie in his 'Emile.'

[2] 'Lettres de la Montagne,' p. 227 ('Oeuvres,' Tome VI. Paris, 1823).

distinction figuratively, Rousseau stands nearly on the same line of latitude as Voltaire, but while the one faces south the other faces north. The one is a connecting link between Bossuet and Diderot; the other is a connecting link between Diderot and Chateaubriand, as his disciple Robespierre paved the way by his feast of the Supreme Being from the Goddess of Reason to the Concordat.

Ethically, also, his sympathies are with the Gospel rather than with the Graeco-Roman moralists. It alone, he declares, is in morals always safe, always true, always unique, and always like itself.[1] Here there is a note of the coming Romantic school, with which Rousseau is also connected by his worship of nature.

But Rousseau's Christianity, like that of the modern Unitarians—and of many liberal Churchmen who do not call themselves Unitarians—is without dogmas and without miracles. Indeed, his discussion of miracles as evidences is one of the most powerful and convincing arguments in the whole literature of the subject, and the more so because it appeals directly to the refusal of Jesus himself to authenticate his mission by a sign.

By language, association, and direct political influence, Rousseau belongs to the emancipating French literature of the eighteenth century. But as a Genevese, a Protestant, and an enthusiast for Alpine scenery, he attracted the sympathies of the Teutonic nations more than any writer of Catholic France. If he was a link between Diderot and Chateaubriand, he was also a link between the older rationalism and the great literary and philosophic movement of modern Germany. Any attempt at reconciliation between the new spirit and the old was from the nature of things sure to win German attention and imitation. From her geographical position Germany is a predestined mediator between opposing trends of thought as between divergent types of civilisation. And history, in this instance a product of geographical conditions, has come to complete what geography began. Her political and religious disunion has long made unity in all orders of activity the fondly cherished ideal of her foremost minds, but a unity which itself must be united

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 224.

with individuality. Her very language, with its Teutonic vocabulary and Latin structure, aptly illustrates the national tendency—a tendency sometimes wholly chimerical, as when Leibniz made advances to Bossuet for a reunion of Protestantism with Rome, or wholly grotesque, as when old Friedrich Wilhelm taught his subjects to love him by caning those who fled at his approach. Its most serious and lasting result has been the doctrine of historical evolution.

Rationalism made its way into Germany very early in the century by a number of different routes.[1] Spinoza, Bayle, and the English deists were widely read. Wolf, while systematising the philosophy of Leibniz, quietly receded from his master's rather equivocal association with orthodox Protestantism; and, without absolutely rejecting miracles, made the credibility of their occurrence depend on a number of conditions which never had been, and were never likely to be, fulfilled.[2] The Pietists contrived by a most discreditable court-intrigue to drive Wolf from his professorship at Halle; but Pietism itself tended to loosen the solid framework of Lutheran orthodoxy; and its adherents occasionally leaned in the direction of rationalism.[3] Subsequently the long and glorious reign of Frederick, himself an avowed freethinker, helped to secure a degree of religious toleration unknown to any other great European state. Hence the conflict between reason and religion, elsewhere the cause of so much bitter party feeling, was thought out rather than fought out in the German universities. Here, for the first time, the love of truth for its own sake had a principal share in carrying on an enquiry which, after all, had the investigation of truth for its avowed object. The result might be pleasant or it might be painful; but the difference to men's feelings no more affected its scientific determination than the value of an interesting patient's life affects the diagnosis of his physician.

Still, even in Germany, complete intellectual sincerity as regards religion had at first to contend with formidable difficulties, and has seldom been perfectly realised. Of these some were created by public opinion, while others of a more insidious character were due to the mental constitution of the enquirers

[1] For this whole subject the best authority known to me is Hettner's 'Litteraturgeschichte.'

[2] Kuno Fischer, 'Geschichte der neuern Philosophie,' Bd. III., pp. 636–8.

[3] Ritschl, 'Geschichte des Pietismus,' Bd. III., pp. 173–4.

themselves. Foremost among the latter was the synthetic tendency, already referred to, of German thought, taking the form of an extreme unwillingness to give up any element of belief that has been long and widely entertained. It may be absorbed into a higher truth; but at a certain stage of development it stands for the whole truth, and for such as have not yet risen above that stage it remains the most helpful definition of the world in relation to themselves.

The first to give currency to this view was Lessing, who is therefore justly revered by his countrymen as the founder not only of their modern literature, but also of their distinctive religious philosophy. Unfortunately, as a consequence of his relative conservatism and respect for long-established creeds, Lessing never gave the public a complete account of his own religious opinions. If the reports of his friends are to be trusted, he was, at least towards the close of his life, a declared Spinozist; though whether he adopted the system of the great Jewish pantheist in all its details does not appear. His famous essay on the 'Education of the Human Race,' written shortly before his death, assumes throughout personality and providence as attributes of God in a way inconsistent not only with Spinoza's teaching, but with any logical form of pantheism. This, however, may be an example of that exoteric doctrine which Lessing claimed the liberty of teaching in a world unprepared for the reception of complete and final truth. In evident opposition to the deistic school, sundry reasons—rather strange and fanciful ones—are adduced to account for the restriction of revelation to one small people, not marked out by any particular merit for the privilege of such a distinction. And the imperfections of the revelation itself are similarly justified. Temporal rewards and punishments are defended as a training for the belief in a future life; and the dogma of retribution after death is interpreted as a preparation for the performance of duty from purely disinterested motives. Theological mysteries are not hopeless puzzles: they are anticipatory disclosures of truths which reason will one day discover to be necessary judgments, but could not have discovered at all at the time when they were first revealed. Thus the Trinity is provisionally explained by suggesting that the self-consciousness

of God as a necessarily existent Being involves the reflexion of himself in another Being (the eternal Son) with the same attributes, including personality. Lessing omits to account for the Holy Ghost; but, had he attempted it, his ingenuity would no doubt have been equal to the task. The whole performance concludes with a word for metempsychosis, which is rather inconsistently recommended on the ground of its being the oldest form of religion.

By a curious irony of fate no great German writer has ever come into such violent conflict with the orthodox theologians as Lessing. Towards the middle of the century a German deist of the old school, named Reimarus, but better known to literary history as the Wolfenbüttel Fragmentist, had composed an elaborate attack on Christianity, which he was afraid to publish, but left behind him in manuscript. His family entrusted the book to Lessing, who printed some portions of it, describing them as extracts from an anonymous work discovered by him in the Wolfenbüttel library, of which he was at that time the librarian. One of these extracts dealt with the story of the Resurrection, which Reimarus regarded as a fable, appealing in proof of his opinion to the irreconcilable discrepancies of the four Gospel narratives. Goeze, a Hamburg minister, wrote a reply in the usual style of orthodox apologetics. Lessing thereupon took up the cause of his unnamed author with equal wit and acumen, and, as Goeze returned again and again to the charge, retorted in a series of pamphlets ranking among the greatest masterpieces of controversial literature. From one point of view the result was no more than to bring Germany up to the level long before reached by England and France. But the ulterior effect was to eradicate the notion of Biblical inspiration more thoroughly from men's minds in Germany than anywhere else, and to pave the way for a far more searching criticism of the sacred records than could be practised elsewhere. And Lessing himself was induced partially to abandon his attitude of reserve in matters of religion, much to the benefit of his countrymen, who have had before them ever since, in his drama of 'Nathan the Wise,' such a lesson in rationality as the stage of no other country can supply.

The year of Lessing's death, 1781, is also memorable for

the publication of Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason,' a work avowedly undertaken for the purpose of rehabilitating theism as a philosophical creed. Brought up in the school of Wolf, Kant had subsequently come to abandon that philosopher's old-fashioned spiritualism under the influence of Hume's sceptical criticism. But he retained certain convictions which no criticism could shake, beliefs which might be explained, which could not be explained away. Reared under strict Pietistic influences both at home and at school, he continued through life, even after abandoning Christianity, a Puritan theologian, associating the idea of duty with the idea of God. At the same time, physical studies had familiarised him with the idea of law as not less absolute in the material world than in the sphere of moral obligation, though absolute after another fashion, not as postulated, but as realised. As the first author of the nebular hypothesis he saw the causal chain stretching back unbroken by supernatural interference through ages long anterior to the birth of the solar system. And a true law of causation must also embrace human actions: like all other phenomena, these must be determined by antecedents, must be capable of prediction by a mind acquainted with the necessary elements of calculation, and capable of working out their remotest consequences. Yet, if duty exists at all, as it surely must, it cannot demand impossibilities. What we ought to do we can do, at any sacrifice of our private happiness. In other words, our will must be free while our actions are determined. Here was such an opportunity as the German mind loves of reconciling contradictions in the synthesis of a higher unity.

Hume had pushed to its furthest consequences the principle that all knowledge is derived from experience. It seemed to him to involve the denial of necessary truth, the law of causation included. Within the limits of our observation every event has had a cause, that is to say, it has been preceded by another event, on whose recurrence it will happen again; and by force of habit we expect that a similar connexion will always continue to obtain, as also that it obtained before our experience began, and obtains in all places whither our experience does not reach. But the contrary is equally conceivable. There is no assignable reason why events should succeed one another according to a particular order, or according to any

order whatever. In short, causation is not a necessity, but a fact.

For a time Kant rested content with this sceptical conclusion. His knowledge of mathematics, however, convinced him at last that there might be something wrong about the analysis on which it was based. The fundamental propositions of arithmetic and geometry possess, according to him, a universality and necessity for which experience does not account. They stand on a totally different footing from the truths of simple experience, however certain these may be. We say that all matter is heavy; but we do not see why it should be so, and the contrary proposition is equally conceivable. But it is inconceivable that seven and five should not be equal to twelve, or that their sum should be equal to any other number. And so with the axiom that two straight lines cannot enclose a space. It had been attempted to explain the difference by saying that such propositions are what is called *analytical*—that twelve *means* no more than seven plus five, that a rectilinear figure *means* a space surrounded by at least three straight lines. But Kant will not agree to this. He maintains that in analytical judgments the predicate adds nothing to the information already conveyed by the subject. For example, when I affirm that all matter is extended, I affirm no more than that the notion of matter contains, among other notes, the note of extension. But when I affirm matter to be heavy, I add something to the notion that was not there before, the note of gravity. Kant distinguishes this second class of judgments by calling them synthetic. If, like the truth last quoted, they are derived from experience, he calls them synthetic judgments *a posteriori*. If they go beyond experience, he calls them synthetic judgments *a priori*.

The law of causation belongs to this class of truths. We can no more question it than we can question the axioms of geometry. At the occurrence of every new phenomenon science assumes with confidence that it is determined by an antecedent in time; and even the unscientific assume as much in the ordinary experience of life.

Kant wants to know how we can come by this *a priori* knowledge, so exceptional, so superior in dignity to the great bulk of our information. He formulates the demand by asking,

How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible? There is a reminiscence of his predecessor, Wolf, in the expression; for Wolf had defined philosophy as the science of the possible as such. But neither he nor any other thinker who assumed that things could be known without experience had seen any difficulty in accounting for that remarkable revelation. Phrases about the spirituality of the soul, innate ideas implanted by God, antenatal visions, immediate intuitions, in short, all the jargon of mysticism, were made do duty for a genuine scientific explanation. But Kant was too deeply imbued with the rationalism of his century to be put off with mystical phrases. And such notions as God and the soul were among the least fitted to support a philosophical theory of knowledge, being at that moment on their trial for life. All assertions about them would come under the head of those very synthetic judgments *a priori*, whose possibility had to be accounted for.

A famous saying of Leibniz perhaps gave the hint for a solution. To the principle that there is nothing in the intellect that has not been in the senses, the author of the 'Monadology' had replied, 'except the intellect itself.' Kant prefers to distinguish the two sources of knowledge as object and subject—a distinction which has become classical. He assigns their respective shares to these two fundamental factors in a somewhat summary fashion. It seems appropriate that the subject, being simple and self-identical, should contribute the constant or formal element in knowledge, while the manifold and fluctuating or material element comes from without, from the object.

Among the subjective elements, space and time present themselves first. As the fundamental forms of perception under which we become conscious of ourselves and of the world in general, they must originate from within. They are imposed by us on the data of sense, and have no other reality than what this function implies, no objective counterpart in the nature of things. Hence the self-evident certainty of all our affirmations about space and time as such, and the demonstrative character of mathematical science. We know them thoroughly because we have created them. Our consciousness of them is the consciousness of our own activity.

Kant's theory of the ideality of space and time may have been suggested by his distinction between analytic and synthetic

judgments. What makes the former so certain is that in them the mind operates on its own creations. To say that matter is extended is to make explicit what was already implicit in the subject. But here the process is deliberate, and is carried on with a full knowledge of its character. In dealing with space and time, on the other hand, we have the consciousness of their ideality only to the extent of an instinctive confidence in our own control of the facts under consideration. Kant, however, does not explain why we have been so late in arriving at a consciousness of this consciousness; why we have had to wait until he informed us of what was passing in our own minds.

Since Kant wrote it has been maintained by some philosophers[1] that the ideality of space and time does not necessarily follow from the fact that our knowledge of them cannot be accounted for by mere sensuous experience. We discover them by intuition, and can discover them in no other way; but the same intuition tells us that they have a real existence apart from ourselves. We are in them, not they in us. An ideal counterpart or representative of reality does not exclude reality itself. And it is alleged that Kant has not even attempted to prove the contrary. This, however, is not strictly accurate, for he does allude to the possibility of such an alternative, but only to dismiss it as involving the assumption of a pre-established harmony between subject and object.[2] And such a hypothesis would no doubt imply a miraculous interference with the order of nature, excluded by the rationalism of the age. But the true source of Kant's idealism is probably to be sought in a more imperative order of considerations. Assuming the independent reality of space and time, there might be more in them than is dreamt of in our mathematics,—things even which, if we knew them, would upset our best established conclusions—an apprehension since fully justified by the rise of non-Euclidean geometry.

Thus at its very beginning the Critical Philosophy betrays a tendency to make convenience of systematisation—a form of what I have called intellectual ophelism—the test of truth.

[1] Especially Cousin and Trendelenburg.

[2] 'Kritik der reinen Vernunft': Transcendentale Analytik, erstes Buch, *sub fin.* (p. 163 of Kirchmann's ed.). Kant is not speaking of space and time, but of the categories; his argument, however, applies equally well to the former.

And this goes hand in hand with a tendency to interpret acts of cognition as acts of volition, quite new in the history of thought and fruitful of great results, but in the first instance singularly well adapted for negotiating that restoration of religious belief which Kant always kept in view as the ultimate goal of his enterprise.

Given a chaotic miscellany of sense-impressions spread out before us under the forms of space and time, a further manipulation is needed before the contents of consciousness can be digested into an orderly scheme of knowledge. It is well to say that we learn from experience; but how is experience itself made possible? Only, according to Kant, by what he calls the categories of the understanding, but what we may call that spontaneous logic of the human mind, implied in all language, which Aristotle reduced to scientific form. In order to say anything about anything else, subject must be distinguished from predicate and affirmation from denial; while the subject itself must be conceived as one, or some, or all. Further, the judgments thus formed have to be thought of as standing in certain relations to one another, and as having their subjects and predicates linked together with various degrees of stringency. In this way Kant arrives at twelve, and only twelve, necessary combinations in which the data of consciousness are grouped together, and which are to the understanding what space and time are to sensuous perceptism, one of them being the relation of cause and effect.[1] Thus the law of causation recovers the character of universality and necessity taken from it by Hume. But Kant, like Hume, conceives it as being no more than a law of succession in time. It is therefore, like time, purely subjective and ideal, in other words, not applicable to things in themselves, to the hidden ground of phenomena. We may, and must, ask for the cause of each particular event, but not for a cause of all events, of the world as a whole. Without the categories phenomena would be unintelligible; but apart from their phenomenal content the categories are empty and meaningless: they have no validity beyond the range of our experience.

Nevertheless, our mind is so constituted that it seeks to

[1] Not what is generally meant by the term, but an ideal relation which the adjunction of time converts into necessary sequence.

transcend these limits. Following the example of Aristotle, Kant distinguishes between Understanding, or the faculty by which we carry on particular trains of reasoning, and Reason, or the faculty by which first principles are apprehended. Understanding operates on materials supplied through the imagination by the senses: it gives truth, but truth of a relative and conditioned sort, strictly limited, as we have seen, to experience. Reason, on the other hand, is content with nothing less than absolute and unconditional reality. It seems to combine the abstract processes of thought with the fulness, the totality, and the infinity of intuition under the forms of space and time. As such it evolves three paramount Ideas, as Kant calls them, under which the whole of knowledge is summed up. All subjective phenomena are finally referred to an abiding unity, which is the soul. All objective phenomena, conceived in their totality, together constitute the world. And the synthesis of these two is the Being of Beings, the absolute reality: in other words, it is God. The forms of intuition were proved to be subjective; the categories of the understanding were proved to be subjective; have the ideas of reason any better claim to stand for an independent existence? It would seem as if they had none.

When Kant called his great work a 'Critique of Pure Reason,' he meant that it was to be an enquiry into the competence of reason, apart from experience, to guarantee the objective reality of its three ideas, or, in the language of his predecessors, to establish the validity of metaphysics and the truth of natural religion. And with him, as with Hume, the immediate result is complete scepticism. For rational theology was based on arguments assuming that space, time, and causality exist independently of our mental constitution, whereas the Critique shows them to be purely subjective. And with this demonstration the enquiry might be brought to a summary conclusion. But Kant disdains such an easy victory. Meeting the metaphysicians on their own ground, he takes the three Ideas one after the other, and shows the futility of the reasonings by which it has been attempted to make them the basis of a creed. The immortality of the soul had been inferred from its simplicity. But, even assuming this alleged simplicity to have been proved, it is irrelevant to the question; for we can

conceive a simple substance dwindling away until it vanishes into nothingness. As to the world and its origin, contradictory views may be maintained with the same appearance of logic. An extended universe must be either finite or infinite, composed of atoms or infinitely divisible, created or eternal, contingent or self-existent; and each of these mutually exclusive alternatives can be proved by arguments of equal cogency. Finally, the arguments for the existence of God are entirely futile. The only one that seems adequate to such an object is the ontological proof. Given the idea of a perfect Being, his existence necessarily follows from it, for he would not be perfect did he not exist. But this is mere sophistry. Ideas are complete in themselves whether they have or have not a counterpart in reality. My conception of a hundred dollars remains the same whether I am or am not in possession of that sum.

So far Kant's criticism of theology is destructive. His conclusion, however, is less negative than Hume's. Speculative reason neither affirms nor denies realities transcending experience. And scepticism, as usual, leaves an opening for faith. Our philosopher chiefly impressed his contemporaries as the author of a new method for the restoration of belief. It is a method which, with various modifications, has been practised ever since, and nowhere perhaps so much as in England, but never so warily as by its first originator.

Speculative reason is a constructive faculty, creating the ideas by which knowledge attains to system and unity. But these ideas remain ideals; they are not realised by being thought. It is otherwise with what Kant calls Practical Reason. This also is a principle of systematic unity, a unity which must be realised, or life would contradict itself, would fall into chaos. We are reasonable beings, and reasonable conduct cannot be conceived except as obedience to a common law, the same for all. That law is morality. If in contemplating any action we pause to ask what would happen were every one to do what we think of doing, and if we find that the consequence would be social ruin, then we may be sure that the action is wrong. Let it not be imagined, however, that mere obedience to the law suffices to make us moral agents. To obey it from selfish or sentimental motives is not to obey it at all.

Neither fear of bad consequences to ourselves, nor hope of pleasure, nor pride, nor affection, can be permitted to determine our choice. Reverence for the law as such is the sole moral motive. This does not mean, as some have supposed, that duty must be opposed to inclination. The two may or may not coincide: but whether they do or do not is indifferent to duty. Its command is what Kant calls a categorical imperative: Do this or that because it is right, as distinguished from the hypothetical imperative, which is merely advising people to do this or that if they want to avoid being punished in this world or damned in the next.

The clear enunciation of this principle was the greatest single advance ever made in ethical science, and raises Kant high above the level of his eighteenth-century predecessors, who had all more or less contaminated its purity by the admixture of earthly or heavenly sanctions. But his own grasp of its bearings seems to have been imperfect.

To begin with, he interprets disinterested morality as postulating the metaphysical doctrine of freewill. What we ought to do we can do. Of that there certainly can be no doubt. But the facts do not seem to warrant Kant's inference that the moral will is released from the law of causality. Reverence for right may surely be conceived as a motive sufficiently strong to overcome the solicitations of animal passion, or evil habits, or self-interest; and it will be for psychology to explain how so beneficent a result has been attained in certain favoured individuals. Only the assumption that man is by nature incapable of obeying any higher motive than enlightened self-interest can begin to justify such an abrogation of natural law as the appeal to freedom involves; and apparently Kant was misled by the common opinion of his contemporaries into making such an assumption. The awkward thing was that his philosophy had pledged him from the outset to that law of universal causality which freewill would signally violate. But herein, as I have said, lay one of those contradictions which the German mind delights to discover and reconcile.

Kant gets out of his self-created dilemma by means of the doctrine of the ideality of time. If all events form, and must form, a continuous unbroken chain of causally connected antecedents and consequents, the reason is that, by the constitution

of our minds, we are obliged to view them under the form of time, which they have to fill up in a forward-flowing stream. But this very fact shows that,we being, so to speak, the creators of time, are independent of it, and therefore also independent of the law of causation. In every act of freewill, in every moral act, we verify this independence and initiate a fresh series of events.

So far Kant puts himself in line with the ordinary indeterminists; and one would expect him to say, like them, that human actions, being free, are not calculable, not predictable, or, at least, not predictable in so far as they are free. But in him the scientific spirit would not permit of such a derogation from law. Any one, he tells us, with sufficient knowledge and ability, could predict what a given person in given circumstances would do. Possibly he was anticipating under a half-mystical, half-scholastic form the modern doctrine that determinism and moral reponsibility are perfectly compatible facts. But his method of reconciling them cannot be called particularly happy. For the necessity of viewing actions under the time form is so absolute that it extends to character, which indeed is merely another name for the totality of a man's actions together with their determining motives, summed up under general headings. And these must be understood as a succession if they are to be understood at all. Kant's so-called 'intelligible' character existing outside time is really the most unintelligible thing in the world, even on the principles of his own philosophy. He forgets also that our individuality is at least as phenomenal as our bondage to time and space. Abolish these dispersive forms, and the result is likely to be a mystical monism in theory and a rigorous fatalism in practice.

Kant's object was not merely to vindicate morality, but also to restore religion. His theology, however, is even more illogical than the ethics on which it is built. As a speculative method the Critique is agnostic. Not merely can nothing be known outside experience, but the widest imaginable extension of experience would bring us no nearer to absolute reality, that is to something independent of our consciousness, and subject neither to the forms of space and time nor to the categories of the understanding. There can be no meaning in immortality apart from time. There can be no meaning in God apart from

causation. Nor is this all. By his theory of morality Kant would seem to have cut the ground from under ethical ophelism as an element of faith. Seeing that his categorical imperative demands unconditional loyalty to the law of duty, and seeing that a good will—which is the only real good—would cease to be itself were any extraneous motive allowed to contaminate its purity, we might have expected that its herald would, less than any other philosopher, have entangled morality in a compromising alliance with theological sanctions.

Nevertheless, it is just on the foundations of his moral and metaphysical idealism that Kant attempts to rebuild the fallen edifice of natural religion. As the Critique of Pure Reason neither affirms nor denies the existence of transcendent realities, an opening is left for faith. And faith appeals to the demands of the Practical Reason in support of its claims. We are not, it is true, to do our duty in hopes of being rewarded for it hereafter; but in order to virtuous effort we must form an ideal of the highest good towards which such effort tends. That ideal is the harmony of virtue and happiness, a harmony not to be realised in this life, and only realisable elsewhere as the goal of an infinite endeavour. In other words, the moral ideal postulates individual immortality as the necessary condition of its attainment. More than this, it postulates a moral and intelligent agency by which the order of things has been so adjusted that virtue and happiness shall ultimately be brought into harmony with one another. And that agency is what we mean by God.

Whether this preposterous theology was ever seriously accepted, as originally propounded, by any human being may be doubted. There are even doubts as to whether Kant himself took it quite seriously. By a curious ethical irony, beliefs professedly based on a moral interest always remain open to the suspicion of immoral equivocation; and from this suspicion the Critique of Practical Reason has not escaped. It is even related that on being asked in society what he thought about a future life, the philosopher frowned and remained silent. When the question was repeated, he replied that no store should be set on that belief.[1] We are assured that his theism at any rate was beyond doubt. Yet it might have occurred

[1] Hettner, III., ii., 26.

to a bystander that as God was only postulated in order to guarantee the future union of virtue with happiness, still less store could be set on his existence.

Apart from the two rather ambiguous postulates of his ethical faith, Kant's rejection of supernatural religion is complete.[1] Miracles are inconsistent with the fixed order of nature necessarily assumed by reason, and as a matter of fact they do not happen. Guilt is neither incurred by the fault nor expiated by the merit of another. Prayer has no efficacy; nor have the ceremonies of public worship any value apart from a good life. But, like Rousseau, Kant was amicably disposed towards Christianity, and, like Lessing, he sought to give its leading dogmas a philosophical interpretation. His estimate of human nature, however, differs widely from Rousseau's. It is, he says, radically evil, and so far lends countenance to the doctrine of original sin considered as a universal taint. History and observation bear testimony to a widespread wickedness, not to be accounted for as a simple yielding to animal passion, but amounting to a deliberate rebellion against the moral law as such, and meriting infinite punishment. This apostasy from right reason may be properly described as a fall of man from his destined state; nor can he be rescued therefrom by any gradual process of reformation. Nothing less than instantaneous conversion and regeneration is needed to restore him to his primitive dignity. But even when this momentous step has been accomplished by the workings of grace, as theologians say, or by his own convictions and efforts, as pure reason says, past guilt still remains to be expiated. Punishment before conversion would have been useless, for the sinner would not have recognised its justice: punishment after conversion would be unjust, for it would not then be deserved. In this dilemma the agonies of repentance are accepted in full discharge of the debt incurred. Thus there is a reasonable sense in which we may say that the sufferings of an innocent person are a vicarious satisfaction for the sins of the guilty.

What happens in the course of every individual conversion has been illustrated on a world-wide scale in the drama of universal history. From the moral point of view, the world has

[1] His views are to be found in the treatise entitled 'Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft.'

been created that the law of righteousness might be fulfilled, and of all known beings man alone is capable of fulfilling it. As the supreme end of things he is the final cause of nature, the divine Word by which all things were made, the eternal Son of God. But, owing to the fall and corruption of the race, this purpose has only been adequately fulfilled in the one example of perfection it has produced, in the sinless life leading to the death in torment and shame of Jesus Christ. In him the moral ideal is personified, and the divine Sonship completely exhibited.

A more shadowy existence falls to the Third Person in the Trinity, whom Kant identifies with the spirit of good in ourselves, the source of comfort and confidence when we are beset by fears of relapsing into sin. But he has another method of demonstrating the Trinity as a truth of pure reason, which is to consider the three persons as separate aspects of the divine essence in its legislative, administrative, and judicial capacity.

Kant's reconciliation of religion with reason is, as the foregoing summary will have amply made evident, neither rational nor religious, but a mere provisional *modus vivendi;* and, like all such provisional arrangements, was contemptuously flung aside by his successors; nor has any of the neo-Kantian school, so far as I know, attempted to revive it. Even on the principles of his own critical philosophy it is logically indefensible; much more then on the monistic principles by which his critical dualism was speedily replaced. Fichte, Kant's immediate follower in the line of speculative evolution, had studied Spinoza deeply, and stood to his German master in much the same relation as that in which Spinoza had stood to Descartes. His 'Theory of Knowledge' uses the materials supplied by the 'Critique of Pure Reason,' but throws them into a simpler and more systematic form. Kant had assumed subject and object as coexistent independent entities, each contributing its share to the contents of consciousness. Fichte assumes nothing but that of which we are immediately certain, the Self. The self is active, or rather is pure activity, and as such would naturally spread out to an infinity in which the consciousness essential to selfhood would be lost. Accordingly it sets up a limit, an obstacle to its own advance, which yet it labours to overcome. This

limit, this obstacle, is the not-self; and from the incessant action and reaction of these two arises the world of sense, of space and time, of the categories, analysed but not perfectly understood by Kant.

The Self is of course neither Fichte's own nor any other subject: it is the absolute Ego realising itself in a multitude of individual and relative selves in order to more complete consciousness and power in its conflict with the non-Ego, that is to say with the material world. Our duty is to spiritualise and assimilate this world of matter, penetrating it through and through with intellect and will, that the absolute Self may be all in all. All other duties exist but as means to that great end. Our social obligations from justice up to mutual love and help have for their sole object, not happiness, but the more and more perfect organisation of the human race as a colossal instrument for the work of scientific and industrial progress. That work must, from the nature of the case, go on for ever. Were it completed by the perfect assimilation of the non-Ego, the absorption without a remainder of nature into spirit, the very condition of consciousness would be abolished, and the Self would expire at the moment of victory.

With such an ethical system as Fichte's there can no longer be any question of a reconciliation between happiness and virtue; for happiness is a thing of no account. Nor yet does it postulate the fulfilment of the moral ideal; for such fulfilment, as we have seen, would involve the annihilation of the Self. There is, then, no need of a God to realise the irrealisable; nor, for other reasons, does Fichte's philosophy permit us to conceive that such a being as the personal God of the theists can exist. Personality implies consciousness, and consciousness implies limitation—limitation of a twofold sort, first by that which is not ourselves, by the material world, and then by that which is not myself, by my fellow-men. Nevertheless, there is an element of truth in Kant's theology. God exists, not indeed as the reconciler, but as the reconciliation. He is the moral order of the world, the very process by which truth and right, and that which alone gives truth and right their value, the power of spirit over matter, comes to be realised.

Such a confession of faith very naturally, although much to his own surprise, brought on Fichte a charge of atheism, leading

in the end to his expulsion from the chair of philosophy at Jena. This catastrophe, combined with the reactionary tendencies of the new century, led him to reconsider his theological position, and indeed to reshape his whole philosophical system. But these ulterior developments do not concern us here. From the chair provided for him at Berlin Fichte exercised a great and happy influence on the moral life of Germany. Alone among her philosophers he contributed by his lectures to the patriotic movement by which Napoleon was finally overthrown. The movement, however, although idealistic in its origin, was not connected with one system more than with another; still less had it anything to do with religion; and Fichte's later version of religion in particular never seems to have gained a single disciple. Here it will be enough to say that God was no longer conceived under the abstract form of the moral order of the world, but in a more concrete fashion as the root-fact of existence manifesting itself through human consciousness, but possessing no more personality than is connected with such a manifestation. This is Spinoza's pantheism under another name, and possibly with the addition of belief in human immortality.

Pantheism is, indeed, as Heine has observed, the real religion of Germany; a fact rather startlingly illustrated at the close of the eighteenth century by the publication of the first and most popular work of one destined to be recognised hereafter as the greatest of modern German theologians. I refer to the celebrated manifesto of Schleiermacher, entitled 'Discourses on Religion,' and addressed 'to the educated among her despisers.' The class so designated might have retorted that the orator surrendered all they had ever rejected, and offered them as the essence of religion a mere phantom not worth fighting about, a sentiment as compatible, or rather, more compatible with their philosophy than with the popular theology. The young apologist, a nursling of the Moravian community, sharply separates the domain of religion from the domains of metaphysics and of morality. Its affinities are neither with reason nor with action, but with feeling. What specifically constitutes religious emotion is the feeling accompanying the intuition of the infinite universe and of our oneness with it. Such a religion can

hardly be said to involve any belief—in Schleiermacher's own case it excluded the belief in immortality—and therefore it has nothing to fear from rationalism, which means the destructive action of reason on a certain set of beliefs, not on emotions of any kind, except in so far as these cannot exist without an intellectual foundation.

Schleiermacher's position in the history of religious thought is ambiguous. In a sense his surrender of all that had been hitherto understood by religious belief marks the extreme limit of eighteenth-century rationalism, and leaves nothing more for criticism to attack. But in a sense also the Discourses, with their passionate mysticism, their convinced affirmation of religion as the supreme fact of life, and their living sympathy with all the great historical faiths, mark the beginning of a reaction likely to carry men's minds back to beliefs and practices which their author would have repudiated with the whole force of his acute and comprehensive understanding. Perhaps it was in the anticipation of such a disastrous development that Goethe and Schiller read the book with a disgust rather surprising, at least on Goethe's part, when we remember how nearly he approached its standpoint in Faust's famous confession of faith, where also feeling is glorified as the all-in-all of religion. And in point of fact Schleiermacher did find himself intimately associated with the Romantic movement which, starting from the classical idealism of Weimar, was turning more and more to the Middle Ages for its models in social, artistic, and intellectual construction. One of the leaders of the movement, and for a time Schleiermacher's most intimate friend, Friedrich Schlegel, threw himself eagerly into the religious current, and not long afterwards found an appropriate resting-place in the Roman Catholic Church, to be followed by many others of the same school, among whom, had he lived, would probably have been included the most gifted of the Romanticists, Novalis.

Meanwhile German scholarship was slowly amassing the materials for that criticism of the Bible which has aided the general movement of European rationalism far more powerfully than German philosophy and speculative theology, partly because its results, being independent of the peculiar German

temperament, could be easily communicated to foreign nations, partly also because its methods harmonised with the general trend of historical research all over the Western world. After Spinoza had begun the work of disintegration, the next steps, curiously enough, were taken by two French Catholics, one of them an Oratorian, the celebrated Richard Simon. According to no less an authority than Ernest Renan, Father Simon created the modern method of exegesis.[1] In his 'Critical History of the Old Testament' he treats the Pentateuch as a gradual growth formed by successive interpolations and recasts. Bossuet, whose attention was called to the work before its publication, scented the danger to traditional faith, and at once procured an order for the destruction of the whole edition (1678). It was, however, secretly reprinted in Holland, and enjoyed a wide circulation. But Simon had far outstripped his age, and three-quarters of a century elapsed before Astruc, the son of a Huguenot pastor, who had abjured his faith after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, published those epoch-making researches into the composition of Genesis in which the so-called Elohist and Jehovist documents were first distinguished. Thirty years later the same results were independently reached by Eichhorn, from the date of whose 'Introduction to the Old Testament' they may be considered as definitely acquired to science; Ernesti had already laid down the fundamental principle of rationalistic exegesis, that the Bible is to be interpreted like any other book (1761); while Semler, going a step further, had definitively shattered the dogma of inspiration by showing that the formation of the Canon was a gradual process effected by purely human means. Like the English deists, he held that the demoniacs of the Gospel were simply insane or epileptic sufferers; and, possibly at the suggestion of Middleton, who seems also to have influenced his views on early Church history, he drew attention to the unlikeness between Judaic and Pauline Christianity.

It may have been noticed, with some surprise, that in this preliminary sketch of the history of rationalism very little account has been taken of physical science. But in fact the

[1] See his Preface to the French translation of Kuenen's 'History of the Old Testament.'

popular idea of its importance as a factor in the destructive action of reason on religious belief is considerably exaggerated. It may be admitted that in our own time the hostility, real or supposed, of science to religion has done more to shake popular belief in the supernatural than all other causes put together. But the question is what share reason as such has borne in this revolution. It seems to me that what we have here is less a real advance of reason than a transfer of authority from religious to naturalistic belief. Practical interests have been so profoundly affected by mechanical inventions due to increased knowledge of natural laws, and the imagination has been so stirred by the far-reaching vistas which a scientific reconstruction of our planet's past history discloses, that a great part of the reverence once given to priests and to their stories of an unseen universe has been transferred to the astronomer, the geologist, the physician, and the engineer. It is assumed that they know everything, and that what they agree in discrediting must be false. But authority is not reason, and although a valuable help towards procuring a fair hearing for reason, cannot with advantage be put in its place. It is especially a dangerous game to play against the theologians, who, being accustomed to manipulate authority for their own purposes, much prefer to join issue on that ground. Assuming that their pretensions are threatened from no other quarter, they either try to discredit science, or to discredit its representatives, or to detach them by timely concessions from the ranks of rationalism.

In this connexion I may refer to a totally unwarrantable phrase which not many years since obtained wide circulation, 'the bankruptcy of science.' An abstract term expressing the sum of what we know about nature can break no engagements, because it cannot enter into any. Philosophers may have cherished unreasonable expectations of the happiness destined to result from a more thorough acquaintance with the laws of the material universe; but they cannot burden their heirs with the obligation of realising their dreams. Such charges have also the disadvantage of exposing their authors to dangerous recriminations. No religious or political institutions, not even the most reactionary, have redeemed the promises made by their more fanatical supporters.

Vague talk about science in the abstract, or rather about its semi-mythical personification, has the graver disadvantage of obscuring its historical conditions. It begins to pass for a sort of beneficent genius, bestowing priceless gifts on mankind, but possessing a life independent of theirs, or, like that of the old gods, dependent only on their sacrifices in the shape of liberal endowments. But science needs something more than endowments. It can only flourish in a particular intellectual climate, which, when once created, it can help to maintain, but which other social factors are needed in the first instance to create. It is doubtful whether the Copernican astronomy could have been constructed without the classical revival, or have held its ground without the Reformation; although when once established it no doubt contributed to the weakening of traditional authority. And the science which, from the rationalistic point of view, comes next to astronomy in historical order, that is geology, was retarded for at least a century by theological prejudice. Leibniz led the way in 1680 by his theory, now universally admitted to be true, that the earth began as an incandescent and molten mass of matter. All that followed has been merely a question of detailed investigation. But the working out of Leibniz's great conception brought the geologists at every step into collision with the Scriptural statement that the world had been created in six days, and even with the theistic belief that it had been created at a particular date. Further complications were introduced by the fable of a universal deluge, confirmed, even to its alleged date, by the New Testament, which not only embarrassed the explorers of the earth's crust by interfering with their conclusions, but even set them on a false track by suggesting that this miraculous visitation was responsible for traces of marine action really referable to changes of far remoter antiquity. Indeed, Voltaire's grotesque theory that the fossil marine shells found among the Alps were left there by pilgrims returning from Palestine, shows with what success the new science had been appropriated to the defence of orthodoxy. At a later period Cuvier's theory of catastrophes, itself perhaps suggested by the Scriptural Deluge, supported the theistic belief in special creations. Every now and then the earth was supposed to have been visited by a tremendous convulsion, involving the destruction of all its living inhabitants, with a consequent necessity

for the intervention of divine power to replace them by a new set of plants and animals. And later still, after the discovery of glacial periods, it was held by some that a like wholesale destruction of organic life must have been caused by ice-caps extending from the poles to the equator, to be made good in each instance from some inexhaustible source of power.[1]

Such are the vagaries of science when placed under the guardianship of theological traditions. The truth is that men of science, so far from being emancipators of the human mind, owe their own emancipation from superstition—so far as it goes—to the higher and freer spirit of philosophy and literary criticism. With many of them a childish eagerness for rewards and distinctions, combined with a more than childish dread of giving offence to the established authorities, produces a servile attitude towards what they suppose to be the reigning opinions; while with many also absorption in specialities, and a pedantic horror of theories stand in the way of daring innovations. Thus the nebular hypothesis, though afterwards accepted by astronomers, owes its origination not to any professional astronomer, but to an amateur, the philosopher Kant, led thereto by a deep conviction that all physical phenomena are explicable by physical causes; and a century later we find the same hypothesis indebted for its most powerful advocacy to another philosopher, Herbert Spencer, animated, in this instance, by the same spirit as Kant. Again, while geologists like Buckland and Hugh Miller were laboriously reconciling their science with 'The Mosaic account of creation,' historical criticism came to the rescue by demonstrating that there *is* no Mosaic account, but at least two conflicting accounts, written long after the date assigned to Moses, of perfectly human and uninspired origin—'mosaic' indeed, but with a small m. Lyell's uniformitarian theory, which drove Cuvier's catastrophes and miraculous fresh creations out of the field, is said to have been suggested by the gradual growth of the English constitution, that is to say, by historical criticism of another kind. And it will be shown hereafter that the doctrine of evolution, now commonly regarded as an achievement of physical science, really originated among philosophical students of human history, and was forced by their speculations on the biologists. Similarly

[1] This was what Agassiz believed.

the group of ideas and tendencies known under the collective name of Positivism, whether understood according to the strict definition of Auguste Comte or in the looser sense associated with it by contemporary philosophical classification, were originated, developed, and systematised in primary reference to human interests.

So much had to be premised in order to guard against an overestimate of the scientific factor in modern rationalism. Nevertheless, physical science has unquestionably played an important part in the rationalistic movement of the nineteenth century, chiefly in the way of verification. It has told by giving reality and life to the contention of Diderot and Hume, that the action of natural causes might be sufficient to explain structures previously interpreted as the productions of a designing intelligence. It has told by bringing new evidence for the derivation of man, with all his mental faculties, from animals no higher than those to whom religion now denies an immortal soul. It has told by extending the antiquity of the human race to a period totally irreconcilable with statements once believed to be binding on religious faith; and at the same time, more indirectly but more powerfully, by enormously multiplying the number of human beings who were allowed to perish unredeemed. The disproportion of heathens to Christians, alarming enough before, has become utterly inexplicable by theology through the results of modern research. Instead of the problematic inhabitants of possible planets, who may or may not have fallen, who may or may not have heard about the Atonement, science confronts us with millions of men who certainly lived and died in prehistoric ages, who certainly sinned, of whom it is not less certain than of any unconverted savage now that their sins were not forgiven. We say science, but practically the one science of geology has done it all. And that science owes its first fostering to the rationalism of the eighteenth century, its final emancipation to the rationalism of the nineteenth.

CHAPTER V

ENGLISH RATIONALISM BEFORE AND AFTER THE REVOLUTION

In the preceding chapters of this work we have followed the general history of European Rationalism down to the close of the eighteenth century, by way of a prelude to the more strictly limited portion which is to follow. Henceforth we shall be concerned with the history of rationalism in England alone, or with the progress of destructive criticism abroad only in so far as it has contributed to a similar process among ourselves.

To trace the vicissitudes of that process is a more complicated and difficult operation than might at first sight appear. The historian of rationalism in the great Continental countries, that is, practically speaking, in France, Germany, and their intellectual dependencies, has a far simpler and easier task to perform. He has to describe a comparatively regular curve, and the materials for its construction are unequivocal and abundant. With us it is otherwise. For while the corresponding tendency has never been so regular or so sharply defined, the indications of its presence, seldom in themselves very intrusive, have been habitually kept out of sight by the chief organs of public opinion for fear of causing scandal or annoyance. And, what is more important, we may say of the conflict between reason and faith, as of all other conflicts, that the dividing line between the principles and parties at issue has been much less trenchant in England than elsewhere. That this is so will be generally admitted; but why it should be so requires some more precise explanation than the vague commonplaces which generally do duty for that purpose.

Religious belief, whether positive or negative, belonging as it does to the inmost life of a people, must obey the conditions by which that life has been first shaped, and the forces, whether

permanent or transitory, which continuously develop or control it. Now, with the English people these conditions have been exceptionally varied, these forces have been not only variable but singularly subtle and elusive in their action. The geographical structure of the British archipelago has enabled it to harbour a number of heterogeneous nationalities, each with a distinct character of its own, the resultant of cross-breeding between divergent but not violently contrasted racial stocks; while the use of a common language by the vast majority of the total population has brought their respective idiosyncrasies into fruitful interplay. This primordial heterogeneity arose from successive conquests on the largest scale, extended over many hundreds of years; nor did the foreign colonisation of these islands cease when the Norman settlement brought the era of armed migrations to a close. For considerable bands of fugitives sought within their shores a refuge from the religious or economical oppression of other states; and these have not been so thoroughly assimilated but that startling reversions to the ancestral type are occasionally manifested in families bearing alien names.

In the country so peopled an incomparable diversity of industrial opportunities, too well known to require enumeration, has come to complicate the original heterogeneity still further, at the same time softening down the resulting contrasts by the economic necessity of mutual dependence; while, as another and remoter consequence of England's manufacturing and commercial activity, her children have been brought into fertilising contact first of all with the great neighbouring civilisations, and finally with every form of society on the face of the earth.

The groundwork of character thus provided by physical and economical causes has received its final elaboration from political events. Whether inherited or not from our Germanic forefathers, English liberty indubitably owes its historical constitution to the very conquest which threatened to destroy it. A philosophical historian has shown that William the Conqueror, by weakening the power of his feudal nobility, unintentionally threw them for support on the people; thus preparing the balance of power between King, Lords, and Commons, the system of local self-government, and the

representative institutions by the early acquisition of which England was distinguished from the Continental states. Whether the distinction has been in all respects a gain we need not here enquire. For our present purpose the important thing to note is that, combined with those other circumstances above mentioned, it has led to the final formation of that most complex phenomenon, the English national character—complex and kaleidoscopic enough in the single type, complex and kaleidoscopic to a much higher degree of involution in the community to which it belongs.

It is a familiar commonplace that no sharp line of demarcation can be traced between the different classes and professions of which that community is made up. Their boundaries are indistinct, and their component parts circulate in a continual stream up and down or to and fro from one to the other. But it is also true, though less generally recognised, and sometimes even implicitly denied, that no single creed or interest or tendency has ever become permanently associated with any one class, or party, or church, or local division in the country. Attempts have indeed been made to find a historical basis for our modern party-groupings, to connect them by an unbroken line of continuity with the sections, whether of race or of religion, of industry or of geographical position, between which the nation has at some former period been divided. But even when certain external links of parentage, and a process, so to speak, of merely mechanical evolution have been made good, the advocates of this view have failed to establish any deeper community of principle between the causes which they have sought to identify or to bring under a common denomination. Our sympathies may go out warmly to one particular side in those 'battles long ago;' and we may fancy that the fortune of ideas we hold most dear was bound up with its success; while in reality its champions would have been filled with dismay at their own victory, and their adversaries consoled for defeat, could either have foreseen the remote issues involved in the event of some decisive day.

Again, when we exaggerate the affinities between ourselves and those whom we suppose to have represented our opinions in the past, we are led to overlook the extent to which they and their opponents were agreed. This fundamental agreement is indeed

a prominent characteristic of the English spirit, a necessary consequence of the conditions by which it has been shaped. And thus it is that in the midst of their most ardent conflicts Englishmen remain united by a close community of ideas and aims, feeling themselves often intellectually and morally not much more deeply separated in the theological and political arena than, in their hours of relaxation, at the whist-table, on the cricket-field, on the race-course, or on the river. It would be untrue to say that they make politics a game; but their preferences are in fact determined by such slight differences of valuation that they can fight with as little rancour as if they were playing a game. Hence the facility with which English statesmen change sides, or adopt measures habitually identified with the policy of the opposite party. They 'called the chess-board white'—they 'call it black,' but none knew better at all times how equally it was divided between the two. Some of the most illustrious names in English history—Strafford, Swift, Burke, and Peel, not to mention more recent instances—may be quoted among the number; and their conduct either before or after the great change has been ascribed to anything rather than disinterested conviction; but the best informed historical criticism has done full justice to the integrity of their political conscience.[1]

Another result of the same balanced attitude, and one less open to misconstruction, is the English disposition to compromise. Where controversies turn on such slight differences there is no sacrifice of principle involved in surrendering a part of the claim originally advanced; especially when, as often happens, there is good hope of eventually securing the whole by patience and moderation. Only a fraction, however, of the compromises effected in English history have been publicly acknowledged as such. Various settlements which seemed to imply the exclusive triumph of one side have practically involved an admission that the other side had to a great extent made good its claims. Thus the Cavalier Parliament of 1661,

[1] Croker, Macaulay, and Disraeli, carrying the vindictive clannish feelings of the Irishman, the Highlander, and the Jew into English politics, have done much to introduce bad blood where it ought not to have been encouraged. On the other hand, no one has done so much justice to English placability and magnanimity as Sir Walter Scott, who viewed it from the outside, but with high artistic sympathy and appreciation.

with all its passionate loyalty to the Crown, really confirmed and carried on the work of Pym and Hampden; while the Latitudinarian Church of the Restoration gave security against the return to Rome, dread of which had alone won popular favour for the Puritan movement. And, conversely, what seemed the annihilation of Jacobitism at Culloden was followed within a brief interval by its virtual revival in the Francophil policy of Bute, and the personal government of George III.

Where a number of competing interests and beliefs coexist in the community, many of them organised under the form of voluntary associations, with none so powerful as to establish its undisputed ascendency, and none so weak as to permit of its complete suppression, a spirit of good humour, fairplay, and mutual toleration seems likely to prevail. The desire to avoid undue self-assertion, combined with respect for the tastes and possible peculiarities of other people, or with the fear of giving offence by some unguarded utterance, will generate a certain amount of social shyness. But at the same time truthfulness and candour will be encouraged; for where there is so little danger in the avowal of eccentric or unpopular opinions, their concealment, and still more the pretence of adhesion to the established creeds, would betoken a more than ordinarily contemptible pusillanimity. And unquestionably this sort of courage has long been an element in the English ideal of character; any expression of it being at all times likely to command the applause of an English audience.

Nevertheless, it would be vain to ignore the fact that English society, as compared with that of France or Germany, has not precisely this reputation, but rather the opposite, where the deepest religious questions are concerned. A wide latitude of choice among the creeds has long been permitted; but whatever may be the case just now, or whatever may have been the case from a hundred to a hundred and fifty years ago, it yet remains true that during an extended period of English history, and that too a period distinguished for great intellectual activity, the profession, and still more the publication in print of complete disbelief in religion, or even in what were supposed to be the essential dogmas of Christianity, was repressed by a system of penalties and disabilities strikingly at variance with the principles of religious liberty affected by those who inflicted

them. And it would be equally vain to deny that during the same period the English people, more than any other nation, with the possible exception of their American kinsfolk, have earned a reputation for religious cant and hypocrisy wholly incompatible with the courage and truthfulness claimed by themselves as peculiarly English, and assumed as genuine in the foregoing characterisation.

I think it will be found on examination that these seemingly adverse views are perfectly reconcilable with one another; that the exception proves the rule; and that the anomaly arises from the same fundamental conditions to which we owe a type of character on the whole admirable, although disfigured for a time by this accidental and transitory blemish.

A historical parallel may facilitate the explanation. Among the city-states of antiquity the Athenian democracy was famous for the individual liberty enjoyed by its citizens, a liberty shared to a great extent by the women and by the servile population. On this point we have the concurrent evidence of friends and foes; and it accounts, among other things, for the fruitage of genius, without parallel in history, borne by the Attic soil. But to this liberty there was one exception; it did not extend to religion. Not only the direct denial of the popular mythology, but the publication of scientific theories seen to be inconsistent with that mythology, was punished with death by the democratic tribunals, an outrage elsewhere unknown in the Graeco-Roman world.

Now, although the Athenian people must rank high above the English for intelligence and taste, and although in other respects the two states are very widely contrasted, some very significant analogies may be observed between them. Both build up a great sea-power round an original nucleus of military strength. Both combine extreme individual liberty with an extraordinary faculty for self-government. Both have produced dramatic and lyric poetry of the highest order. In both the greatest thinkers have preferred ethical and social to purely speculative philosophy. And in both the leading minds have habitually taken into account religious prejudices which they do not always share.

It is in this last consideration that the key to the anomaly under investigation must be sought. I mean the anomaly of

individual liberty coexisting with gross religious intolerance—and it may be added of childish superstition coexisting with widely diffused intelligence in the middle class.[1] Popular intolerance and superstition naturally foster insincerity and affectation among the higher orders. We generally look on the canting hypocrite as a peculiarly modern product; and it is certain that the type has only reached perfection in modern times. But Plato has given us, under the name of Euthyphro, a real or imaginative sketch of something very like one among the contemporaries of Socrates; and Plato himself, as well as Aristophanes, has gone very far in the direction of advocating popular beliefs which he privately held to be no more than useful conventions.

Wherever and whenever the democratic element comes into prominence it will, I think, be found to exercise this sort of influence on the guiding intellects of society. The wish to flatter a great and growing power in the state; the wish to win its support for a particular party or cause; the wish to utilise religion as a restraint on popular passion, or on insolent oligarchic reaction; finally, the wish to believe what so many people believe;—all these motives taken together constitute a formidable mass of public opinion acting in restraint both of free speech and of freethought. And in the particular case of modern England it has been reinforced by that spirit of mutual respect and forbearance, of chivalrous unwillingness to push an advantage too far, of scrupulous abstinence from all that seems likely to give offence, which characterises our people in their dealings with one another. More especially will this feeling come into play when no practical advantage seems likely to result from an otherwise unpleasant discussion.

If, however, it should appear that the popular beliefs are not only irrational but mischievous, that they are directly productive of unhappiness, that they are used to prop up abuses, or that they impede the beneficent advance of physical science—not known as such at Athens—a very different tone will be

[1] Compare the implicit faith put in old prophecies by the Athenian Demos, so amusingly ridiculed by Aristophanes and Thucydides, with the millenarian and Anglo-Israelite prophecies in which the lower middle class and the uneducated upper classes of Britain take so much delight. In discussing politics the same people would show ten times the knowledge and sagacity of an average Frenchman or German.

adopted, and attacks on the obnoxious creed will be welcomed where they were once frowned down. But such breathing-spaces are not of long duration. After an interval of dismay and confusion, the religious leaders learn to accommodate themselves to altered circumstances. Temporary misunderstandings are made responsible for the quarrel; and an attempt to carry on the controversy with a single eye to the ascertainment of truth as such is either stifled by a conspiracy of silence, or blandly waved aside as the result of an antiquated point of view. Possibly the spread of knowledge among classes whose ignorance was the best guarantee of their fidelity may lead to developments by which this complacent optimism sometimes finds itself rudely disturbed. But the subject is one that must be reserved for future chapters of this work.

So much for the complexity of the English character—an interesting topic, the detailed illustration of which will fall into its proper place as we proceed. Meanwhile that particular aspect of it which we call the spirit of compromise will serve to elucidate certain phases exhibited by English rationalism in the second half of the eighteenth century. It will be remembered that the deistic movement came to a close with the appearance of Middleton's attack on ecclesiastical miracles. Negative criticism of supernatural beliefs was continued with activity and success in Scotland, France, and Germany; but for several years no important book was published on that side in the country which had long been the sole European representative of freethought. But it would be a great mistake to infer from this protracted silence that there had been any general change of opinion among Englishmen, at least in the sense of an orthodox reaction. On the contrary, what evidence we have goes to show that unbelief, whether under the form of deism or of some more extreme negation, long continued to spread through the higher classes of English society.

There was still indeed a great preponderance of literary and philosophical ability on the orthodox side, just as there had been in the age of Swift and Addison. Hartley, Johnson, Burke, and Paley among the more serious thinkers; Young, Gray, and Cowper among the poets; Richardson, Fielding, and Sterne among the novelists, threw the lustre of their genius on

the official creed; and whatever may have been Goldsmith's real convictions—if he had any convictions—his influence unquestionably told in its favour. But as the century wore on this preponderance became less decided. Horace Walpole, who was no mere fashionable dilettante, but a great master of language, an enthusiast for humanity, a penetrating observer, a deep-read scholar, and a leader in the Romantic movement, after beginning life as a pietist, turned freethinker and remained so ever afterwards. Erasmus Darwin, Bentham, Godwin, and Charles Fox[1] were atheists; Lord Shelburne, at least in private, an avowed sceptic; Gibbon, the greatest historian of modern times, need only be named in this connexion.

Even the official defenders of orthodoxy were becoming suspected of hypocrisy. Bishop Warburton 'had the reputation of being an atheist;' his patron, Lord Mansfield, 'who condemned Peter Annet to a year's hard labour for an anti-Christian publication,' was currently reported to be himself an unbeliever.[2] Lord Bristol, Bishop of Derry in 1783, did not believe in revealed religion;[3] and Bishop Watson, the celebrated apologist for Christianity and the Bible, who narrowly missed being made Archbishop of York, 'talked openly,' according to De Quincey, 'at his own table, as a Socinian.'[4]

At the same time this formidable advance of rationalism was marked by an almost complete cessation of the direct attacks on Christianity and of the attempt to set up deism as a rival religion which had characterised it during the earlier half of the century. A compromise had in fact been arranged by tacit consent between the two contending parties. The established Church was to be left in undisputed possession of its dignities and emoluments. Sensible men were to think as they liked, and might even let their friends know what they thought; but they were not to publish books against revelation, nor even to obtrude their heterodox opinions in conversation.

On this point the attitude of Horace Walpole is typical.

[1] 'No believer in religion' ('Greville Memoirs,' Pt. II., Vol. I., p. 154. First edition). Coleridge is the authority for Erasmus Darwin ('Letters,' p. 152); the evidence for Bentham and Godwin will be given later on. For Shelburne, see Bentham's Life ('Works,' Vol. X., p. 88).

[2] Bentham, *ut supra*, p. 65.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

[4] 'Works,' Vol. II., p. 111.

He refers in terms of strong condemnation to the folly of the royal philosopher of Sans Souci in publishing irreligious verses at the very crisis of his fortunes,[1] and contrasts his levity with the dignified reserve of Lord Ferrers. That nobleman committed a brutal murder, for which he was hanged at Tyburn in 1760. The chaplain of the Tower, who accompanied him on his way to the scaffold, thought it his duty to begin talking about religion. Lord Ferrers, who seems to have been a deist, waved the subject aside, and declined to be drawn into a controversy with the clergyman about it. He always thought Lord Bolingbroke made a mistake in publishing his notions on religion, and would not fall into the same error.[2] A few years later Walpole visited Paris, and found, to his disgust, that the tone of French aristocratic society differed widely from that recommended by the noble assassin. Men and women were all employed in pulling down God and the King. When persons of quality were not atheists it was rather from want of intelligence than from want of good will.[3] Men of learning were at no pains to conceal their hostility to the established religion. 'At a dinner of savans the conversation was much more unrestrained, even on the Old Testament, than I would suffer at my own table in England if a single footman was present.'[4] Even in the absence of that solitary domestic Walpole considers that the subject had better be avoided. 'Freethinking is only for one's self, not for society . . . there is as much bigotry in attempting conversions from any religion as to it.'[5] Yet he sees no bigotry in maintaining the penal laws against Roman Catholicism, and complains bitterly of the new lease of life given to it by their repeal.

In return for this contemptuous toleration on the part of a sceptical society, concessions not less complete were made by the Church of England to the spirit of the age. Addison's view of Christianity as a kind of popularised Greek philosophy was accepted in good earnest. Sermons became moral essays, and the morality preached was pagan, Stoic or Epicurean doctrines

[1] 'Horace Walpole's Letters,' Vol. IV., p. 387 (Mrs. Paget Toynbee's edition).

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 384.

[3] 'Letters,' Vol. VI., p. 403.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 332.

[5] *Ibid.*

being substituted for righteousness by faith.[1] Supernatural religion was valued not as an organised method of mystical communion with the unseen, but as affording proof positive of immortality by the well-attested fact of Christ's resurrection, and 'a violent motive' to good conduct by the tremendous sanctions which his doctrines contained. Even John Wesley's preaching, which both Churchmen and sceptics regarded with dismay as a new and unexpected outburst of Puritan fanaticism, was on the moral side deeply imbued with the same spirit, and accepted with liberal sympathy every trace of aspiration towards a higher life among heathen writers.

But the spirit of compromise by no means exhausted itself in the establishment of this *modus vivendi* between rationalism and faith. It gave a great and growing importance to two sects which, more than any others, served to mediate between Christian orthodoxy and deism. I refer to the Unitarians and the Quakers, two communities which, relatively speaking, may be said to have attained their highest point of intellectual and moral strength at this epoch. Attention has already been drawn to the growth of Unitarianism as a proof of the powerful influence exercised on religious thought in England by the deistic movement. Here I may add that it had gone a long way towards joining hands with the deists, by accepting their favourite doctrine of philosophical necessity, a doctrine much more fatal to orthodox theology than even the denial of the Redeemer's divinity, since the need for any redemption from future damnation must vanish with the belief in freewill.

This change of front was due, above all, to the initiative of Dr. Priestley, who reprinted Collins's masterly treatise on 'Liberty and Necessity' for the instruction of his contemporaries; while at the same time he made an advance towards the French Encyclopaedists by accepting their materialism, which, however, he managed to reconcile with the Christian dogma of the resurrection. Nor was the debt all on one side. For to Priestley belongs the glory of having originated the idea of human perfectibility in its full modern sense, that is 'as the progress of the human race towards a happiness of which we

[1] Coleridge's 'Notes on English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 86.

can as yet form no conception;'[1] but a happiness to be realised on earth, and to be brought about by man's own unaided efforts, exercised with the utmost possible freedom.[2] Once started, this idea was taken up with enthusiasm by the leading intellects of France and Germany, who developed it in detail and practically put it in competition with the Christian ideas of a Fall and of a felicity reserved for glorified saints in heaven.

The Quakers of the eighteenth century, if less stirring and conspicuous than the Unitarians, made in some respects a nearer approach to pure rationalism. 'The Quakers,' says Thomas Paine, himself of Quaker parentage, 'are rather Deists than Christians. They do not believe much about Jesus Christ, and they call the scriptures a dead letter.'[3] In fact, their rejection of the sacramental system, of clericalism in every form, implies a wide departure from the principle of authority; and the inner light which they substitute for it, while inadmissible by rationalists, often serves as a transition from traditionalism to pure reason.

How large an amount of English intellect and energy was absorbed by those two communities during the latter half of the eighteenth century is shown by the long catalogue of eminent men and women, altogether disproportionate to their numerical strength, who at that time or in the succeeding age came forth from their ranks. Among the restorers of English science Priestley takes a foremost, if not *the* foremost, place; and of the three most illustrious English physicists at the beginning of the nineteenth century two, Dalton and Young, were Quakers; while two other Quakers, Clarkson and Elizabeth Fry, stand as high among English philanthropists. Lamb and Hazlitt, first of modern English essayists, were brought up as Unitarians; and Coleridge, the most wonderful genius of his age in England, for a time adhered to the same sect. Leigh Hunt was, on the mother's side, of Quaker extraction; and his father left the Church of England to join the Universalists, whose most characteristic doctrine brings them into touch with the Unitarians.

With the French Revolution this period of compromise

[1] 'Essay on the First Principles of Government,' pp. 134–5.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 141.
[3] 'Age of Reason,' p. 135 (in Moncure Conway's edition of Paine's Works).

came for the time being to an end. I have already pointed out that the Revolution did not of itself produce the famous religious reaction of the early nineteenth century. That movement began very much earlier, and would certainly have come to a head, whatever turn events in France might have taken. What the great catastrophe did was to make the faith of the traditionalists more passionate and unreasoning, but also to make the progressists more ardent and outspoken in declaring their convictions, and more courageous in pushing them to what seemed their logical consequences. Nobody in England seems to have been made a Christian by what was happening in Paris. A few elderly gentlemen, and a few lads who came under their influence, may have been frightened into the Tory camp: but even they hardly accepted the Reign of Terror as a very strong argument for the veracity of the Gospel history. In France itself Chateaubriand, the future apostle of restored Catholicism, writing years after the fall of the monarchy, declared that no one believed in the Bible; while in Germany the rising generation, as represented by Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and Wilhelm von Humboldt, would have nothing to do with Kant's ethical rehabilitation of Christianity; and whether by an independent development or under the influence of Continental thought, all the young English poets[1] advanced towards a complete rejection of religious belief.

Another effect of the Revolution was to bring rationalism more distinctly into line with democratic opinion. A certain affinity between the two orders of liberalism had been recognised in the early days of English deism; but the example of Bolingbroke, Voltaire, Frederick, Hume, and Gibbon had done much to detach freethought from its alliance with the popular cause. Even Bentham in his younger days combined strong anti-American and anti-Jacobin leanings with a thorough detestation for every kind of religion.[2] But the political exigencies of the situation in France put an end for the time to such cross-voting. The senseless anti-clerical and anti-papal measures of the National Assembly drove every Catholic priest and every layman who valued priestly ministrations into the

[1] Among whom I do not count Scott.

[2] 'Works,' Vol. X., pp. 81 and 296. Halévy, 'Le Radicalisme Philosophique,' Vol. I., p. 313.

legitimist ranks. In England the Tory cry of Church and King, and the sanction given by Wesley to the colonial policy of George III., would tend to make orthodox Whigs reconsider their theological position.

However stimulating it may have been at first, the alliance with French democracy ultimately did rationalism no good. As the old French mania for universal domination exhibited itself more and more clearly under the new masquerade of universal emancipation; subversive opinions became identified with want of patriotism. Schemes of political reform had to be postponed in presence of the more urgent necessity for protecting the liberties of England and Europe against the aggressions of France and her military dictator; and schemes of religious reform shared the same fate. Even apart from such complications, Reason found herself ill at ease among the most ignorant and turbulent elements of society. The deists of Queen Anne's time were urged by every motive of interest and sympathy to make common cause with the Whigs of the Hanoverian settlement, however much the Whig politicians might dislike being made responsible for the impieties of Toland and Collins. For Whiggism meant the right of free discussion, the control of the Church by the civil authority, the support of Holland and Germany with their liberal Protestant criticism against the reactionary Catholic intolerance of Louis XIV. It did not mean entrusting the destinies of civilisation to the mercies of a numerical majority, who would probably have voted for the restoration of James III. In America, where the revolutionary cause rested on a much broader basis of popular consent, the relative instruction, civic training, and good sense of the masses were such as might well enlist in their favour the support of men like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine. But neither the sanguinary mob of Paris nor the blind and brutal population of rural France seemed to offer serious guarantees for the steady march of enlightenment. Thus public discredit and private distrust were the inevitable consequences of becoming associated with their cause.

At this juncture the situation was saved by the appearance on the scene of a new force. The alliance of rationalism with physical science dates from about the same period as its alliance

with European democracy, and has proved a much more trustworthy support. I have indeed taken occasion to show that the destructive application of reason to religious belief was begun and carried on in complete independence of this alliance; but the very fact that there should be a widespread misconception of their historical relations shows how intimate the alliance has become in more recent times. The first to emphasise its importance among ourselves was Thomas Paine; and it is in that fact that his importance for the history of rationalism consists.

Paine's reputation as a serious controversialist has long suffered from the obloquy heaped on his name by orthodox opponents. It has in recent years been amply rehabilitated by the labours of Mr. Moncure Conway, to whom we owe a full biography of the strenuous fighter, and a complete edition of his works. Paine added nothing to the criticisms on popular Christianity already current before he was born; and his own almost unreasoned deism proves him to have lagged far behind the most advanced contemporary thought. His language about the Bible and its authors is notoriously violent; though perhaps not more violent than Cardinal Newman's attacks on the Roman Catholic Church before his conversion, or on Protestantism after his conversion. It certainly betrays a sad deficiency in what we call the historical sense. Paine cannot distinguish between legendary or mythical narratives, and false statements concocted from interested motives with the deliberate intention of deceiving. That he should adopt this violent tone in writing against Christianity, or rather that he should write against Christianity at all, showed that the period of compromise was over, that the principle of reason and the principle of authority were once more confronting one another as open and irreconcilable enemies.

This attitude was, as I have said, a result of the French Revolution, or, to speak more precisely, of the new alliance between rationalism and democracy. Destructive criticism was not now addressing itself to an academic audience, but to a class unversed in fine distinctions, understanding no controversial method but that of contumelious violence, and prepared to hear that false theological doctrines were bound up with the maintenance of iniquitous privileges.

Like the deists, Paine insists on the all-sufficiency of natural religion. But, unlike them, he associates it with the teaching of natural science. Our knowledge of the Creator and his designs is not an inheritance from the oldest traditions of mankind, but a progressive revelation which has received extraordinary accessions from modern discoveries. Among these the Copernican astronomy holds the foremost place. By suggesting that space contains innumerable worlds besides our own, it brings home to us the absurdity of supposing that the Almighty should have visited this planet to expiate by his death a trifling transgression committed by the first parents of the human race. At the same time, astronomy raises our conceptions of the Deity by disclosing the beneficent arrangements he has made for the instruction of all the inhabitants of all the worlds.

In addition to his criticisms on the Fall and the Atonement, Paine dwells much on the late origin of the Pentateuch; the atrocities committed by the Israelites, acting, as is alleged, under God's orders; the irrelevance of the Messianic prophecies; the late date and anonymity of the exilian chapters in Isaiah; the disorderly arrangement of Jeremiah; and the improbabilities of Jonah. Strangely enough, he accepts the Book of Daniel as genuine. Altogether, as far as it goes, and as against the superstitious notions then current, his attack must be pronounced successful. Many of the clergy would now go much further; and, whether as a consequence of this or of other works, a complete change of front has been adopted in the defensive tactics of all.

With certain modifications the same may be said of Paine's New Testament criticisms. They are not new; being, in fact, such as at all times would naturally occur to a reader of independent mind and strong common sense. The repeated charges of fraud and imposture brought against the Apostles and Evangelists—though never against Jesus himself—jar painfully on a modern ear. But they are largely due to the mistaken notion, shared by Paine with his orthodox contemporaries, that the Gospels and Acts were written by contemporaries and eyewitnesses of the events related. If the traditional headings of those books could be accepted as genuine, it would be hard indeed to acquit their authors of deliberate deceit; and, even as

it is, the charge is one that very serious critics have felt themselves obliged, after due consideration, to repeat against the unknown authors of some parts of the Gospel narratives.

Paine's 'Age of Reason' called forth a reply from Watson, the non-resident and freethinking Bishop of Llandaff. It is entitled 'An Apology for the Bible,' and is chiefly remembered in connexion with a naïve observation of George III. His Majesty 'was not aware that any apology was needed for that book.' The Bishop's knowledge of Biblical archaeology and of Hebrew seems to have been on a par with his sovereign's knowledge of Greek. Paine had very justly observed that the expression used of Abraham, 'pursued them even unto Dan,' could not possibly have been penned by Moses, seeing that the northern extremity of Palestine was not occupied by the tribe of Dan until some centuries after the recorded date of his death. To this Watson calmly replies that the name in question does not belong to a people but to a northern tributary of the Jordan, a river which, as is well known, derives its appellation from the fact of its being formed by the confluence of two streams, called respectively the Jor and the Dan.

An indirect but more effective reply to Paine's attack, so far at least as it bears on the New Testament, was supplied by Paley's 'Evidences.' The main object of this celebrated work was to prove (i.) that the Gospels were written by the men whose names they bear; and (ii.) that these men are to be accepted as credible witnesses because they were willing to stake their lives on the reality of the events they profess to have seen. On the first issue Paley totally failed to make good his case. On the second he came much nearer the truth than Thomas Paine. But this was of little importance, for before either of them wrote the theory of imposture had become completely discredited, although with no more advantage to Christianity than to any other of the great rival religions. Nor, admitting the absolute sincerity and profound religious conviction of the witnesses, did it follow that their stories deserved the implicit confidence claimed for them by the Cambridge apologist. For their enthusiasm rendered them exceptionally liable to delusion; and the most self-devoted enthusiasts are not celebrated for always speaking the exact truth. In some respects Paley, with his cool calculating rationality, stood farther even

than Paine from the founders of Christianity, and was even less fitted to understand the source of their convictions.

A much more effective counterblast to Paine's 'Age of Reason' than anything that either Watson or Paley could offer appeared a few years after its publication. In the history of English religious thought Wilberforce's 'Practical View of Christianity' holds a place very similar to that occupied by Chateaubriand's 'Génie du Christianisme,' and by Schleiermacher's 'Reden über die Religion,' in the religious history of France and Germany respectively. For knowledge and literary ability Wilberforce can indeed no more be compared with the brilliant French rhetorician than, for philosophical grasp and depth, with the German theologian. But his very lumbering and long-winded homily is, what he called it himself, practical; and for practical purposes it was the best possible appeal to his countrymen on behalf of religion that could be devised. It stands for the entrance of Evangelicalism, as a great religious and social force, on the scene of public life.

The religious revival of the eighteenth century had in England organised itself under the form of two schools, of which one broke off from the established Church, while the other remained within its pale. The Nonconformist division branched into the various sects of Methodists. The Anglican division, numerically much the weaker, and long without any bond of union except what was created by common convictions, but destined ultimately to exercise a more powerful influence on men's minds, became known as the Evangelical school, and still exists under that name. With few exceptions the wealth, rank, and intellect of the country were nearly as hostile to them as to the schism headed by Wesley and Whitfield. But the period of obloquy ended with the accession of William Wilberforce to their ranks. In adopting Evangelical principles he threw over them the prestige of his brilliant parliamentary and social position, a prestige still further enhanced when his long and laborious efforts to free England from her unhappy responsibility for the African slave-trade were at last crowned with success. It was while still engaged in that glorious struggle, but without any reference to the interests involved in it, that he published his 'Practical View.'

Unlike his great Continental contemporaries, Wilberforce does not come forward—except in the most incidental manner—to defend Christianity against its theoretical impugners. That part of the work had, in his opinion, been sufficiently done by Paley, whom he mentions, though not by name, in terms of high admiration. Besides, infidelity does not strike him as a very formidable enemy. There is not much of it in England, and what there is he attributes to moral depravity.[1] It is a disease of the heart rather than of the head.[2] The literary assailants of Christianity, from Lord Herbert to Hume, have been seldom read, and are now forgotten. But for Leland their very names would be unknown. What alarms Wilberforce is the profound misconception of Christianity prevalent among the upper and middle classes, their absolute ignorance of what is implied in the religion they profess to believe. There is a fatal habit of distinguishing Christian morals from Christian doctrines, with the result that doctrine has almost vanished from view. We are told not to ask what a man believes, but to look at what he does. For a century past the pulpits of the Church of England have been chiefly devoted to preaching up mere morality; and the popular novelists, who most faithfully reflect the spirit of the age, give us the same idea of its tendencies. With the solitary exception of Richardson, they never make their religious characters allude to specifically Christian doctrines. And this morality is of an irreligious type. Men's standard of right and wrong is not the standard of the Gospel. Principles are advanced altogether opposite to the genius and character of Christianity.[3] The guilt of bad actions is measured, not by their offensiveness to God, but by their injuriousness to society.[4] Amiability and usefulness are substituted for religion,[5] the observances of which have indeed become so distasteful to the generality that business itself seems recreation in comparison with them.[6] In short, no more is expected from a good Christian than from a good deist, Mussulman, or Hindoo.[7]

In opposition to this cheerful and tolerant optimism Wilberforce reminds his readers that the recognition of human

[1] 'Practical View,' p. 472.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 474.
[3] P. 12.
[4] P. 236.
[5] P. 247.
[6] P. 197.
[7] P. 24.

nature as corrupt lies at the root of all true religion,[1] and is eminently the basis and groundwork of Christianity. In proof of this depravity he appeals to the experience of mankind in all ages, all countries, and all orders of civilisation; but above all to the testimony of the watchful, diligent, self-denying Christian who has become deeply sensible of the fact by observing what passes in his own heart.[2]

How such a position can be reconciled with the Christian doctrine of regeneration, whether granted at baptism or at some other period of the believer's life, does not appear. In this, as in other respects, Wilberforce's view offers a striking parallel to that put forward by Kant a few years earlier in his essay on Religion, with which the English writer can hardly have been acquainted, even by report. But the coincidence ceases to surprise when we remember that it is due to a common derivation. Whether this doctrine of human depravity is or is not the foundation of all religion, it is at any rate the foundation of that peculiar religion which we call Pietism. As such it was taught to Kant by the Pietists, among whom he grew up. And it came to Wilberforce, though less directly, through the same source. For the Wesleyan movement was essentially a German importation. It arose from the direction given to Wesley's thoughts by his intercourse with the Moravians, a Pietistic sect, whence it passed to the Evangelical school within the Church of England. At the same time English religious thought was being stimulated by the works of William Law, latterly a disciple of Jacob Behmen, in whom the same sense of human nothingness took the form of a more generalised mysticism.

From this consciousness of innate depravity follows, according to the usual logic of theology, the necessity of a redeemer, and the recognition of Christ as having fulfilled that office, to which a God alone was adequate. He has redeemed us by his atoning sufferings and death, with the resulting obligation of inexhaustible gratitude to him and to the Father for having provided such a means of expiation for our sins. Wilberforce, be it observed, takes the strictly penal view of Christ's death on the cross as having been accepted in lieu of the punishment justly due to the disobedience of mankind;[3] nor does he seem to be aware that objections, not necessarily

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 24. [2] P. 36. [3] P. 332.

proceeding from a bad heart, but based on the purest principles of justice, have been raised to such a theory.

To believe in the radical corruption of his own heart; to believe that such corruption would be rightly punished by an eternity of suffering; to believe that the chance of redemption from that fate has been offered by the death in torment of an innocent and divine victim;—these, according to Wilberforce, are the indispensable credentials of the claim to be called a Christian. But these of themselves are not enough. They must be accompanied by a firm resolution to remain in the path of duty by whatever temptations to the contrary he may be assailed. And even that is not enough. The hardest part has yet to come. Visions of the unseen world, as revealed to us in Scripture, must ever be uppermost in his thoughts and reign over his affections to the subordination of every other interest and passion;[1] while as an accompaniment and safeguard of this mystical self-devotion he must foster an unsleeping sense of his own radical corruption and inherent weakness. Some attention must, of course, be paid to the world's affairs if we are to go on living at all. But there is one day in the week when the world must be totally shut out from our thoughts.[2] It does not appear whether Wilberforce pushed his sabbatarianism to the same degree of intolerance as the later Evangelicals. But his exhortations point in that direction; and his denunciation of all theatrical exhibitions, the Opera included, are uncompromising in their severity.[3]

From this point of view it is evidently not enough to acquiesce unfeignedly in every dogma, and to fulfil the acknowledged obligations of morality with unfailing diligence. A perfectly orthodox believer, leading a highly honourable, useful, and innocent life, may still be no better than a castaway, if piety is not his ruling passion. 'God requires us to set up his throne in the heart, and to reign in it without a rival.' 'He who bowed the knee to the god of medicine or of eloquence was no less an idolater than he who worshipped the deified patrons of lewdness or of theft.'[4] Apparently a William Herschel or a John Hunter, a Reynolds or a Walter Scott, nay, even Wilberforce's own friend and leader, Pitt (who had no time to

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 188.
[2] Pp. 193 *sqq.*
[3] Pp. 306 and 318.
[4] P. 177.

go to church), were doomed to the same fate, as Louis XV. or George, Prince of Wales, were as guilty before God as any slave-trader or any capitalist who was working little children to death in his factories.

The truth is that all consistent mysticism looks on the self-assertion of individual existence as an offence against the absoluteness of the All-One; and mysticism, as we have seen, counts among the great tap-roots of religious belief. But the genuine mystic has a large charity for individuality unknown to the mere religionist, who falsifies his passion for unity by just that admixture of reason which converts it from an ecstasy into a logical contradiction. For nothing could derogate more from the all-comprehensiveness of God than the everlasting survival of his enemies, whether in hell or anywhere else.

While addressing himself primarily to the high aristocratical society in which he moved, and while pointing to the disastrous consequences of a laxity like theirs, or even worse than theirs, in 'a neighbouring country,' Wilberforce well knows where the strongest support for his reactionary views is to be expected. He appeals to the most ignorant and passionate classes, to the lower orders and to women. Originally addressed to the poor and simple, the Gospel still finds the readiest acceptance and the most faithful adherence among them.[1] And the distinctly emotional religion which he advocates is alone fitted for them, as they must be acted upon by their feelings or not at all.[2] The female sex, too, seems by the very constitution of its nature to be more favourably disposed than ours towards the feelings and offices of religion;[3]—a providential arrangement, as Wilberforce observes, with an unexpected gleam of worldly shrewdness; for it leaves men more free to apply their minds to business.

Nevertheless, just as Pietism in Germany had remained a religion for counts, so in England Evangelicalism always retained a certain aristocratic stamp, and never really got at the masses, who preferred listening to their Methodist preachers. But from the beginning of the nineteenth century it made steady progress among the upper classes and their hangers-on.

Sabbatarianism had assuredly not been a characteristic of

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 129. [2] P. 409. [3] P. 434.

our statesmen in the preceding period. 'Not only was Sunday the common day for Cabinet Councils, but the very hours of its morning service were frequently appointed for political interviews and conferences.[1]' Pitt, as I have said, could not find time to go to church, nor indeed any time for religion at all. But Perceval, who held the premiership only a few years later, might be seen any Sunday walking to Hampstead church with his dozen children; and we are told that he objected to convoking Parliament on a Monday on the ground that it might induce gentlemen to travel on Sunday; while the great crisis of England's fate left him free to attend to hassocks, psalters, and surplices.[2] Earl Stanhope, the historian, mentions having been told by 'the Lord Lieutenant and for many years the representative of one of the Midland Shires,' that when he came of age there were only two landed gentlemen in his county who had family prayers, whilst at present (1850) there are, he believes, scarcely two that have not.[3]

Still, the custom of holding family prayers, however universal it became, did not preclude a marked distinction as regards their real or professed beliefs between the two great political parties, or at least between the leading men on either side. Since the French Revolution Whig statesmanship has become more closely associated than before with the removal or relaxation of religious disabilities, Tory statesmanship with their maintenance and, if possible, their extension. And on the Whig side this attitude encouraged a certain laxity of opinion, sometimes amounting to complete absence of religious belief, or even hostility to religion. Fox was 'no believer in religion;' Lord and Lady Holland apparently much the same. Their private physician and confidential adviser, John Allen, known as 'Lady Holland's atheist,' used to start anti-religious conversations at the dinner-table of Holland House.[4] Romilly, who began the work of reforming our atrocious criminal code, 'agreed with every tittle' of Bentham's 'Church-of-Englandism,'[5] a work ostensibly directed against the Church Catechism alone,

[1] Mahon's 'History of England,' Vol. VII., p. 320.
[2] Harriet Martineau's 'History of England' (1800–1815), p. 251.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 320.
[4] 'Greville Memoirs,' Pt. I., Vol. III., p. 324.
[5] Bain's 'James Mill,' p. 452.

but saturated with the author's well-known hostility to all Christianity. Sir James Mackintosh, who succeeded to Romilly's position as a law reformer, seems only to have been reconciled to Christianity on his death-bed.[1] Lord Melbourne, Earl Grey's successor as head of the Whig party, although greatly interested in theology, 'believed nothing.'[2] Sir Francis Burdett was 'what in these days would be called an Agnostic.'[3]

When the party changed its name from Whig to Liberal the established tradition remained, in this respect, for a time unbroken. Among clerical circles at Oxford the Liberals had the worst reputation for infidelity, and their advent to power in 1830 caused great dismay. 'The majority of our Liberal rulers,' writes Thomas Mozley, 'believed neither in miracle, nor revelation, nor a personal Deity.'[4] 'Most of the Liberal statesmen believed the Bible to be a fabric of lies.'[5] Mozley gives the impression of habitual exaggeration; but even after large deductions his statements remain significant, and they are substantially confirmed by O'Connell's complaint to Haydon the painter about the infidelity of the Liberals, which he considered a great mistake, as it alienated from them the sympathies of the Irish people.[6]

As for the Tories, Perceval, their sometime chief, has been already sufficiently characterised; Canning in private gave evidence of sincere piety, as also did Wilson Croker. The heads of the Clapham School were originally Tories, and continued to be so until the logic of their emancipating policy drove them over to the party of liberty. Gladstone began as a high Tory; and the sympathies of Lord Shaftesbury seem on the whole to have been on that side, although from motives of political opportunism he sometimes co-operated with their rivals.

In literature the contrast is even greater. The 'Edinburgh Review,' the great literary organ of the Whigs, is said to have

[1] Greville, *ut supra*.

[2] *Ibid.* Elsewhere Greville describes Melbourne as having 'never arrived at any fixed belief' ('Memoirs,' Pt. II., Vol. III., p. 248); but then his political principles are described as equally unfixed.

[3] 'Reminiscences of Mrs. De Morgan,' p. 12.

[4] 'Reminiscences,' Vol. II., p. 206.

[5] P. 265.

[6] Haydon's 'Autobiography,' pp. 351–2.

been 'esoterically indifferent to revealed religion.'[1] Godwin, whose 'Political Justice' represents the extreme Radical position, was first an atheist, then a sort of mystical pantheist. Hazlitt, as is clear from his essay 'on the Fear of Death,' did not believe in a future life. Leigh Hunt professed some vague form of religion very far removed from orthodox Christianity. Byron, a staunch and even prejudiced Whig, was a deist; Shelley, a more advanced political reformer, an atheist. Campbell the poet, a good Liberal, is described as 'very doubtful of the reality of another life.'[2]

On the other hand, the most illustrious man of letters in the Tory party, Sir Walter Scott, seems to have been personally a sincere believer, although the tendency of his novels is certainly not to favour Christianity in any form. Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, in adopting reactionary politics, also returned to the theology which, as republicans, they had discarded. Croker and Professor Wilson, together with the Tory organs over which they presided, the 'Quarterly Review' and 'Blackwood's Magazine,' were professed champions of orthodox Christianity.[3]

It must not, however, be supposed that this division of opinion between the leaders in politics and literature corresponded to a proportionate division in the country. Outside London there seems to have been an overwhelming majority on the orthodox side; and as for London, although Macaulay told the Wilberforces in 1826 that 'not two hundred men there believed in the Bible,'[4] besides allowing for the habitual exaggeration both of the speaker and of his reporter, Thomas Mozley, we must suppose that the unbelievers, whatever were their actual numbers, must have included many who were rather indifferent than hostile to religion. At any rate, the public opinion of the country, taking it altogether, was so distinctly adverse to infidelity that even in London it allowed severe sentences to be passed on a bookseller's shopmen because they sold Paine's

[1] Cory's 'Guide to Modern English History,' Vol. II., p. 8.

[2] 'Reminiscences of Mrs. De Morgan,' p. 118. Bentham and his school must be reserved for fuller discussion hereafter; here it will be enough to say that they were opposed to all religion.

[3] I speak of Wilson in his official capacity. In private he seems to have expressed complete disbelief in religion.

[4] Mozley's 'Reminiscences,' Vol. I., p. 107.

'Age of Reason;' that the Liberal leaders had to conceal their contempt for the popular creed under a mask of respectful deference or even acquiescence; and that the intellectual leaders, with the single exception of Shelley in his youth, never published anything about religion under their own names, whilst their works on other subjects gave only obscure intimations of what they thought on this momentous subject.

At the close of the eighteenth century it had still seemed uncertain which direction public opinion in England would take. Wilberforce does not seem to think that unbelief, or at least reasoned unbelief, was on the increase. But Robert Hall, the great Baptist preacher, who probably had better means of observing than the amiable statesman, took a more gloomy view. He is alarmed at 'the rapid increase of irreligion among the polite and fashionable, and descending (*sic*) of late to the lower classes.'[1] Additional evidence is afforded by the threatened collapse of Unitarianism. I have noticed how this sect rose into sudden significance as one of the compromises between orthodoxy and rationalism temporarily adopted by the English intellect—a significance fully appreciated by Wilberforce, who calls it 'a halfway house to infidelity.'[2] And while the revolutionary fever lasted it shared the fate of other compromises. Complaints arose of the great scarcity of Unitarian ministers, most of the young men at their chief training college having turned infidels;[3] while such young converts as Coleridge and Southey soon abandoned the halfway house for pantheism or atheism.

Perhaps we can best understand the shifting currents of religious belief in that perplexed and vacillating age by observing how they were reflected and represented in the mind of one of its bravest and most virile personalities, the poet Wordsworth. We who are most familiar with the tradition of his peaceful and honoured old age are accustomed to look on this grand figure as the very type of reaction in politics and religion, in all things the very antipodes of Shelley, as one whose 'Tintern Abbey' must be read in the light, or rather quenched in the gloom, of his 'Ecclesiastical Sonnets.' But

[1] 'Diary of Henry Crabb Robinson,' Vol. I., p. 51.
[2] 'Practical View,' p. 479.
[3] Cottle's 'Early Recollections of Coleridge,' Vol. I., p. 177.

we should not forget that to young Robert Browning Wordsworth was still the 'lost leader,' the apostate democrat, who not long before had been fighting on the same side with Burns and Shelley; as for Shelley himself, the 'poet of nature' had not long ceased to be the weaver of 'songs consecrate to truth and liberty'; while Charles Lamb, again, felt no less surprise on hearing of Wordsworth's conversion to Christianity than a similar announcement with regard to Mr. Swinburne would excite at the present day. That change, at least, in Wordsworth's attitude, could hardly be accounted for either by a 'handful of silver' or a decorative title.

Nor can the transformation be explained by such a reaction against the principles of the French Revolution as drove Mackintosh into the arms of Burke, and Canning into the ministry of Pitt. If Wordsworth lost his youthful hopes of a great and sudden renovation of human society, he did not surrender with them the more sober anticipation of a gradual improvement to be effected by such prosaic means as parliamentary reform, or the establishment of popular schools like those which had long flourished in Scotland. In fact, not long before the end of the great war he still held what one of his noble friends described as 'terrific democratic opinions.'[1] And this liberality in politics was accompanied by a corresponding breadth in his religious opinions. The poet of liberty was also, in Shelley's sense, the poet of truth. At the time of his most intimate association with Coleridge, Wordsworth neither was, nor affected to be, a Christian. He 'loved and venerated Christ and Christianity,'[2] but that was all. As the two friends disagreed on this subject, they habitually avoided it. On the other hand, they conversed long and earnestly together about Spinoza; and both agreed with him in accepting the doctrine of philosophical necessity, which Wordsworth, according to Coleridge, 'pushed even to extravagance.'[3] And, if we may judge from a famous passage in 'Tintern Abbey,' the poet of nature seems at that time to have accepted Spinoza's pantheism also, finding in it not only a stimulus for his aesthetic susceptibilities, but even more than that, a support for his moral convictions.

[1] Haydon's 'Autobiography,' Vol. I., p. 125.
[2] Coleridge's 'Letters,' p. 246.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 454.

It is true that the passage to which I refer does not in terms deny the personality of God, and so it has frequently been accepted by orthodox believers as an expression of theistic devotion. Fortunately Wordsworth has not left us in the dark as to this point. In the preface to his 'Excursion' (1814) he quotes a passage from his still unpublished and never completed poem, 'The Recluse,' as a kind of prospectus for the whole vast trilogy of which they were to form the second and third parts respectively, in which the following lines occur :—

> 'All strength, all terror, singly or in bands,
> That ever was put forth in personal form—
> Jehovah with his thunder and the choir
> Of shouting Angels, and the empyreal throne—
> I pass them unalarmed.'

His friend Crabb Robinson understood this as suggesting that all notions about the personality of God are but attempts to individualise notions concerning Mind; but wondered how one so ignorant of German philosophy as Wordsworth could rise to such a height of speculation.[1] There seems, however, to be no real difficulty about the matter. If the poet had not read Fichte and Schelling, he had read their masters, Plato and Spinoza—to say nothing of his conversations with Coleridge. Nor, apart from such teachers, was he incapable of making out pantheism for himself, as clever children have been known to do.

The great 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality' is obviously Platonic rather than Christian in tone, and dwells far more on the soul's pre-existence than on her survival. Nor should we press the Platonic notion of immortality into the implication of an eternally surviving individual consciousness. According to Wordsworth, the apprehension of the highest truths makes our lives seem but moments in an 'eternal silence.' It is not we ourselves that are immortal, but the vast sea of absolute existence, the All-One, which 'brought us hither,' and whose presence stands revealed to us in moments of supreme ecstasy. 'Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,' 'deep buried in the silent tomb,' beyond the reach of all vicissitude, the dead have neither motion nor sentiency of their own, and only little children can really think of them as still living. The first

[1] 'Diary,' Vol. I., p. 465.

book of the 'Excursion' reads the same lesson in still plainer language. There is no other consolation for Margaret's tragic fate than that 'she sleeps in the calm earth.' Though she is dead, the weeds and the spear-grass spring up in inexhaustible luxuriance, conveying an image of tranquillity into the heart, and making us feel that change and ruin are mere shows of Being, not Being itself, and the grief that is felt for them an idle dream.

As was to be expected, Wordsworth's 'Excursion' was denounced by the 'Eclectic Review' for putting Nature in the place of God.[1] In view of such utterances we can understand the incredulity of his old friends when they heard that he had become a Christian. Lamb wrote to ask him if it was true. The touch of so great a humourist seems to have evoked an unwonted flash from one not much addicted to epigram. Wordsworth replied, 'when I am a good man then I am a Christian.'[2] A religion so qualified and limited would hardly have satisfied the requirements of Wilberforce. It savours too strongly of that heathen morality with which the divines of the previous century had sought to identify their creed.

The change probably began with his conversion from necessitarianism, which had been effected at a comparatively early period by the arguments of Coleridge. But the passage from the 'Recluse,' reaffirmed as is its sentiment in the preface to the 'Excursion,' proves that the acceptance of freewill did not with him, any more than with Coleridge, involve the abandonment of that pantheistic religion which, as we shall see hereafter, was at this time held also by the philosopher-poet. Another development, which may or may not be due to the same influence, is indicated by a strange ardour of devotion to the Church of England. When on a visit to London in 1812, Wordsworth astonished his friends by telling them that, although he never entered a church in his own country, he would shed his blood for the Establishment.[3] Pantheism easily lends itself to such subsidised arrangements for giving a splendid and decorous embodiment to the felt community

[1] Crabb Robinson's 'Diary,' Vol. I., p. 468.

[2] Allsop's 'Letters, Conversations, and Recollections of S. T. Coleridge,' Vol. I., p. 205.

[3] Crabb Robinson's 'Diary,' Vol. I., p. 389.

of every individual soul, however humble, with the absolute One, conceived under a personified expression. But from this distant approval to the complete outward conformity of Wordsworth's later years the change is much more marked, and needs to be explained by the pressure of urgent practical considerations.

The tragic accompaniments of the Revolution did not, as I have said, produce any general reaction against its underlying principles. Indeed, those principles at first rather gained than lost in popularity by the vigour with which the soldiers of the Republic defended them. Burke's prediction of the ruin that would befall France as a nemesis for the abandonment of her ancient institutions had, so far, been signally falsified by the consolidation and extension of her military power. And her new civil institutions had proved perfectly compatible with the maintenance—even the too rigid maintenance—of law and order. It seemed absurd to go on calling Bonaparte 'the child and champion of Jacobinism' when he was coming out in the character of its most vigilant and determined enemy. At the same time, his aggressively imperialist policy had given a new actuality to the old rhetoric about liberty, to the traditional phrases about patriotism, inherited from the city-states of classical antiquity. Hence, during the second war with France the difference between political parties in England seemed almost effaced. As against the common enemy of freedom, all were liberals and patriots, as all were loyalists alike. When Scott observed, with a slight note of censure, that Fox had 'died a Briton,' he could point to no real change in the attitude of that illustrious champion of humanity. The cause for which Nelson fell was essentially identical with that which triumphed at Saratoga and Jemmapes. And it was only through the liberal impulse communicated by Fox that the Pittite Wilberforce succeeded in carrying the abolition of the African slave-trade against a coalition of plutocratic and courtly influences.

What policy Fox would have pursued had his life been prolonged into the new conditions of European policy we cannot tell. But we know that his death was followed by a period when, if the Whigs were the party of domestic reform, the

Tories were the party of European liberty, supporting by arms the oppressed nationalities of the Continent, and above all of the Iberian peninsula, in their struggle against Napoleon; while Napoleon himself, by his Austrian marriage, was definitely ranging himself on the side of legitimist reaction. And even in home affairs Liberalism was by no means under a ban. When the Prince of Wales assumed the Regency in 1810, it was expected that the Whigs would take office; and perhaps, but for their own obstinacy, they might on that occasion have secured a share of power much in excess of their absolute number and influence in the country. But such an event would not have seriously altered the general course of affairs. No very marked difference separated them from the Tories, except on the question of Catholic Emancipation; and some of the leading Tories, such as Castlereagh and Canning, supported Emancipation. Had it been carried in the first year of the Regency, a great act of justice would have been performed with a good grace; but the presence of some fifty nominees of the Irish priests, or, what was more likely, of the Irish landlords, could hardly have contributed much to the passage of truly Liberal measures through the House of Commons, and nothing to their passage through the Lords.

As for public opinion outside Parliament, it seems to have been on the whole enlightened and progressive during the continuance of the war. The new discoveries in science and the new departures in literature were received with instantaneous appreciation; while the theories on which they rested were expounded to large and enthusiastic audiences at the Royal Institution and elsewhere. A general wish was felt for the wider diffusion of education; it was admitted that new machinery must be provided for the purpose; and the respective merits of the systems proposed by Bell, on the side of the Church, and by Lancaster, on the side of the Dissenters, were everywhere debated with passionate interest.

How little way religious reaction had as yet made in English public opinion is strikingly shown by the success of Maria Edgeworth as a writer of didactic stories for young people. This powerful authoress is as well known for the moral tendency of her fiction, as for her deliberate ignoring of religious motives in the determination of conduct. One would think, indeed,

that she wished to show, as against Wilberforce's 'Practical View,' that the value of human actions lies solely in their tendency to promote human happiness in this world. The Evangelicals saw this perfectly, and represented her as recommending virtue on the ground of merely selfish interest. But this is an entire misconception of her ethical method. It is true that, in accordance with the tradition of what used to be called poetical justice, Miss Edgeworth takes care that her good characters shall receive ultimate compensation for their temporary trials, and that the vicious or weak shall suffer for their faults. But the motive for rectitude is never self-interest; those who are proposed as objects for our imitation are actuated solely by such an unadulterated regard for the moral law as Kant himself might have prescribed; and the fatal results of allowing even the most amiable considerations to interfere with it are fully set out.[1]

Crowned with the laurels of victory, crowned with the myrtle and ivy of a new and romantic youth, England in 1815 stood forth before Europe in a prouder position than she had ever filled before, even under Elizabeth, or Cromwell, or Chatham, supreme alike in the arts of war and peace. And a prophet might have felt justified in predicting that the general pacification would inaugurate, at least for her, an era of still greater enlightenment, and still more rapid progress towards an ideal of purely human perfection. With the lightening of taxation, the restoration to life-giving energies of funds so long devoted to the work of destruction, and the renewal of fruitful intercourse between English and Continental thought, it might seem as if the dreams of Priestley and Kant, of Condorcet and Godwin, were now at last on the way to be realised.

If such hopes existed, they were destined, at least for a time, to be bitterly disappointed. Hazlitt and Byron and Shelley were no doubt mistaken when they talked as if the cause which succumbed at Waterloo was the cause of European liberty. But it cannot be denied that for some time appearances were in their favour. On the Continent the peoples who had taken up arms for their legitimate rulers on a promise of receiving constitutional government saw themselves tricked

[1] Above all in 'Helen.'

out of the expected boon; and the system of gloomy repression which set in was none the less exasperating for being conducted under unctuous professions of evangelical piety. In England the withdrawal of the artificial stimulus given to the national industries by a vast naval and military expenditure; the inheritance of a huge debt whose accumulation had involved a proportionate destruction of capital; the closure of foreign markets owing to the impoverishment of other nations; and the steady substitution of machinery for hand-labour, brought about a period of economical distress, which pressed with peculiar severity on the poorest classes. Their discontent showed itself in riotous demonstrations, which were put down with merciless rigour, and in a literature of sedition which called forth new laws for the repression of free speech.

The situation offered a superficial resemblance to that which, thirty years before, had preceded and announced the bursting of the revolutionary tempest in France; a like event seemed impending here also; and in view of such a catastrophe, wise men might be excused for thinking that the duty of all good citizens was to strengthen the political and ecclesiastical authorities, with whose maintenance the dearest interests of civilisation seemed to be bound up. And as philosophical infidelity generally passed for having brought about the French Revolution, so now in England the reaction against rationalism for the first time assumed formidable proportions. What people called infidelity—a term sometimes so stretched as to cover the most certain results of modern Biblical criticism[1]—fell into disrepute, and its professors were held in abhorrence by the people at large;[2] with the result that the mere negation of religion 'became a firm bond of union among men who agreed in nothing else.'[3] This disrepute soon extended to physical science, or at least to geology, which was regarded with suspicion among the higher classes as opposed to revealed religion; even Sir Humphry Davy, who had become their toady, enlisting himself among the obscurantists.[4] Conversely the Roman Catholic Church received sympathetic recognition both in

[1] Coleridge's 'Notes on English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 333.
[2] Coleridge's 'Church and State,' p. 183.
[3] John Morley's 'Miscellanies,' Vol. III., p. 50. The words are J. S. Mill's.
[4] Crabb Robinson's 'Diary,' Vol. II., p. 273.

Parliament and in the pulpit as 'a right dear though erring sister';[1] while former attempts at a reconciliation with the Papacy were recalled with high approval. Finally, at a time of bitter financial distress, a million sterling was voted for building new churches; the grant being subsequently supplemented by another half million.[2]

A more subtle indication of the new drift in public opinion, and also a fresh illustration of the English tendency to compromise, is furnished by the return of Unitarianism to something like its former importance. According to Coleridge, writing in 1817, it had at that time taken the place formerly occupied by deism;[3] and just as formerly many had secretly held deistical opinions under a mask of orthodoxy, so now the number of those who in other denominations held Unitarian opinions was tenfold greater than that of its professed adherents.

Such was the political and religious reaction which determined Wordsworth's whole later attitude towards contemporary life and thought. It had, as the dates prove, but a remote and indirect connexion with the French Revolution; and so we can easily understand how the poet's youthful liberalism could survive down to the close of the great war. From a literary point of view, this was fortunate; for the love of liberty and of pure naturalism formed so integral an element in his genius that it at once sank to mediocrity under the yoke of another allegiance. The 'high and tender Muses,' who, in his pantheistic days, had inspired the poet with immortal thoughts and images and words, frowned on the composition of his 'Ecclesiastical Sonnets.' Among all the countless phrases with which he has enriched the English language I cannot find that they have yielded one. Among all the quotations from him occurring in our literature one at most can be traced to them.[4] Out of the three series, numbering altogether 117 sonnets, Matthew Arnold has only considered three worthy of a place in his selection. Sometimes, though rarely, the dreary waste of prose is lit up by a gleam of the old fire. But it will be

[1] Coleridge's 'Church and State,' p. 143.
[2] Sir Spencer Walpole's 'History of England,' Vol. I., p. 388.
[3] Coleridge's 'Church and State, etc.,' p. 373.
[4] 'Sleeps the future as a snake enrolled coil within coil.'

found on examination that the few poetic passages or lines have nothing to do with Church history or theology. They relate to beautiful scenery, or to human love, or to the glories of science and art.[1]

Wordsworth has no claim to the title of an original thinker; nor is even his theory of poetical composition worked out with any logical power. His political and religious opinions were borrowed in every phase of their evolution from those about him —probably in the first instance from Coleridge. Accordingly, whichever side he took, they were marked by a fanaticism, not characteristic of the really independent enquirer, and aided, in his instance, by an enormous self-esteem. This makes him all the more fitted to supply us with a provisional clue in feeling our way through the intricate and ill-understood windings of English opinion in the earlier years of the century. But to unravel the more intimate structure and evolution of English thought as then constituted, we must study it in the mind of one who, whatever his failings, brought to bear a more comprehensive intellect on a larger mass of information, a wider range of ideas, and a more extended key-board of emotion, than any Englishman then living.

I have named Coleridge; and it is to an examination of Coleridge's opinions and influence in their bearing on the history of English rationalism that the next chapter must be devoted.

[1] Part I., xxix., the whole sextet; xxxv., second half of the octave; Part II., iii., last three lines; xvi., second half of the octave; xxi., second half of the octave; Part III., xxxiii. (the famous sonnet on King's College Chapel), the whole sextet.

CHAPTER VI

COLERIDGE

VARIOUS lives of Coleridge have been written; but, so far as I am aware, no history of his religious opinions exists; nor is there even any systematic account of what those opinions were in their settled, or at least their ultimate form.[1] The materials for such an account are, however, sufficiently abundant, although of a somewhat fragmentary and elusive character. They consist of passages in his correspondence, scraps of conversation with friends, marginal notes on theological and other books, with some help from his published works. If the total view, or rather impression, gained by a collection of these various sources lacks clearness and cohesion, we may console ourselves with the reflexion that what Coleridge himself thought, or believed, or believed that he believed, matters little as compared with what younger men under his influence came to believe as the substance of what they supposed to be his genuine doctrine. And for the purpose of this history it must interest us above all to ascertain how that influence affected their attitude, in the way of attraction or repulsion towards the leading points of the popular religion.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) was the youngest son

[1] At the time when Dr. Hort wrote on the subject in the 'Cambridge Essays' important documents, such as Crabb Robinson's 'Diary' and Coleridge's 'Letters,' had not yet been published. His view is therefore so incomplete and one-sided as to be practically almost worthless. James Martineau's study is disappointingly meagre and obscure. No other critic of adequate learning and ability has since attempted the task. In what follows I have adopted the comparatively simple and unpretending method of stating Coleridge's opinions in his own words, with as much connecting commentary as was required to make them intelligible—in so far as they admit of any intelligible construction whatever.

of an eccentric and devout clergyman in Devonshire. At an early age he lost his mother, the only human being who ever fully responded to his affectionate and demonstrative nature. His brothers and sisters were not sympathetic; and his instincts were still further repressed by the rigid discipline of Christ's Hospital, where he was educated under a headmaster of exceptional severity, to whom, however, he considered himself deeply indebted for intellectual guidance. There, among other advanced books, the boy got hold of Voltaire's 'Philosophical Dictionary,' and, as a consequence of his precocious studies, publicly declared himself an infidel. We are not told at what age this profession of unfaith was made; but at any rate he was still young enough to be flogged out of it by Dr. Boyer. Coleridge in after life spoke of this flogging, which was one of many, as the only one he ever deserved. At least its effect was never obliterated; for even when holding opinions at which Voltaire would have shuddered, he never ceased to describe himself as an excellent Christian.

As an undergraduate at Cambridge he came under the influence of William Frend,[1] who was tried in the Vice-Chancellor's Court and sentenced to expulsion from the University for the publication of radical and Unitarian opinions. Coleridge himself subsequently joined the Unitarians to the extent of occasionally preaching in their chapels. How long the connexion lasted is not clear. He speaks of it somewhere as having terminated in sixteen months; but this, while possibly true in a strict sense, would be a considerable understatement of the time over which his general sympathy with their position extended; for, writing to a Unitarian minister in 1802, he speaks of the Unitarians and Quakers as the only real Christians. What eventually alienated Coleridge from them was, according to his friend and confidant, Thomas Allsop, the moral character of the sect. He accused them of insincerity, selfishness, and moral cowardice[2]—charges which strike one as rather odd, coming from such a source. Their acceptance of the economic doctrines then taught, and especially of Malthusianism, also contributed largely to his dislike.

But differences going to the very root of morals and religion

[1] Father of Mrs. De Morgan, the celebrated mathematician's wife.

[2] Allsop, Vol. I., p. 60.

must at all times have put the young philosopher out of sympathy with the Socinians, as he persisted in calling the community after he forsook it. The doctrine of Original Sin, even more than the Trinity or the Incarnation, was a scandal in their eyes. Now Coleridge, writing to his brother George in April, 1798, declares himself a most steadfast believer in original sin, that is to say, in the inherent depravity of human nature. And for this disease he pronounces the *spirit* of the Gospel to be the sole cure; adding, however, that he looks for it 'neither in the mountain nor at Jerusalem.'[1]

What he means is that our performances and efforts fall short—often very far short—of our ideals. No one knew this better or from a more intimate personal experience than Coleridge, in whom an exceptionally weak will and an exceptionally slothful temperament went along with an almost superhuman strength of intellect and imagination. Not having been spoiled by indulgence from others either at home or at school, his conscience was all the more sensitively awake to the viciousness of the self-indulgence which he habitually practised when released from external restraint. This constitutional weakness of will was aggravated at an early period by the habit of opium-eating, begun in 1796 as a relief from physical suffering, and continued, as he alleges, from the same motive, though latterly to a less excessive degree, till near the close of his life. And the desire to satisfy his growing appetite for this expensive stimulant superinduced on his character the additional vices of unjustifiable extravagance, evasion of pecuniary obligations, and deceit habitually practised in order to elude the watch placed on him by his own desire.

One can understand, then, that the sense of sin, conceived as an overwhelming fatality, should have been particularly active with Coleridge. It is less intelligible that he should have generalised this deep and well-founded consciousness of his own delinquencies into a comprehensive indictment of human nature as such; and that he should have regarded the spirit of the Gospel as a cure for the world at large when it was proving so totally inoperative in his own particular instance. Looking no further than his own contemporaries, the heroic examples of Wordsworth, Southey, Scott, and Lamb might have given him

[1] 'Letters,' pp. 241–2.

more encouraging ideas of what human nature could achieve in the way of high and consistent moral worth—could even achieve without invoking supernatural assistance; for Wordsworth was not in his best years a Christian, while Lamb remained a sceptic to the last. As it happens, also, he who so vilified human nature owed nearly everything to the disinterested kindness not of friends only, but oftener of chance acquaintances or complete strangers, attracted by pity for his misfortunes and admiration for his splendid genius.

Yet, though surrounded by so much affection, Coleridge remained unsatisfied and insatiate. 'Why,' he exclaims, 'why was I born for love, and love denied to me?' His need, indeed, for love, and his ardent response to its first manifestations constituted, perhaps, more than any intellectual brilliancy, the secret of that wonderful charm which was exercised on all whom he approached. But, unlike that of which Wordsworth heard a turtle-dove sing, the passion with him began quickly and soon ended; like Laodamia, though strong in love, he was all too weak in self-control, and without that soul-depth which the gods approve: the least friction, the least disappointment, brought on a crisis of violent revulsion and estrangement.

To such temperaments as this the very conditions of individual existence, with its limitations of extent and duration, become intolerable. They pine for reabsorption in the super-essential One of Neo-Platonism, which is also the supreme Good: and they conceive creation under the allegory of a Fall, an apostasy from their primal unity, of spirits infected with the original sin of self-will, the desire to set up for themselves, to constitute a world in space and time. And their redemption from that world of bitter disillusion must be effected through a divine sacrifice, infinite in self-surrender to the supreme Will as the crime of self-assertion which demanded such a propitiation was infinite in its guilt.

As a schoolboy Coleridge had already familiarised himself with Neo-Platonism, and had translated the Hymns of Synesius into English anacreontics. During his first association with Wordsworth the two young men studied Spinoza together, and talked over his philosophy in the course of their walks. The monism of Spinoza's Ethics seemed to find a scientific basis in

the associationism based on Locke's philosophy, to which Coleridge first gave the physiological interpretation of Hartley, and afterwards the spiritualistic interpretation of Berkeley. A nine months' residence in Germany, followed by a close study of Kant in his English home (1801–4), still further strengthened the spiritualistic convictions to which he remained true for the rest of his life. He now abandoned his youthful necessarianism as being inconsistent with the consciousness of moral obligation, and persuaded Wordsworth to abandon it also. But, like Wordsworth, he still remained a pantheist. Indeed, the most distinct declaration of impersonal theism to be found in all Coleridge's writings belongs to this period. A letter of his to the Rev. J. P. Estlin contains the following significant confidences :—

'I am sometimes jealous that some of the Unitarians make too much an idol of their *one* God. Even the worship of one God becomes Idolatry in my convictions when instead of the Eternal and Omnipotent, in whom we live and move and *have* our Being, we set up a distinct Jehovah tricked out in the *anthropomorphic* attributes of time and successive thought, and think of him as a *Person* from whom we *had* our Being. The tendency to Idolatry seems to me to lie at the root of all our human vices—it is our original sin. When we dismiss three Persons in the Deity only by subtracting *two*, we talk more intelligibly, but, I fear, do not feel more religiously—for God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit.'[1]

That this was no casual speculation, tentatively thrown out, but a deep and settled conviction, is proved by the fact that it was communicated as such to at least one of his friends besides Estlin. William Godwin tells a correspondent that he first met Coleridge in 1794, and that six years later their 'acquaintance had ripened into a high degree of affectionate intimacy.'[2] Holcroft had made him an atheist; Coleridge's conversation caused him to regard that name with less complacency, and led him into a new train of thinking. He retained 'the utmost repugnance for the idea of an intelligent Creator and Governor of the universe,' suggesting as it did the most irrational anthropomorphism. (Anthropomorphism, be it remembered, is the very

[1] 'Letters,' p. 415 (1802).

[2] Kegan Paul, 'William Godwin and his Friends,' Vol. I., p. 119.

word used by Coleridge in the same connexion.) But he has come to think that there is a sort of theism independent of that idea. He has adopted a religion consisting in 'a reverent and soothing contemplation of all that is beautiful, grand, and mysterious in the system of the universe, and with (*sic*) a certain conscious intercourse and correspondence with the principles of these attributes.'[1] If this was a vague it was at least a permanent faith, for twenty years later we find Godwin describing himself as an adorer of nature, never weary of admiring and reverencing the majestic structure in which we live; his soul full to bursting with its incomprehensible mystery; and this he still calls religion. It will be remembered how great a part the same cosmic emotion plays in 'Tintern Abbey,' the 'Recluse,' and the 'Excursion;' how at the very same time it was being proclaimed to educated Germany by Schleiermacher as the triumphant refutation of atheism; and how both in England and Germany it was associated with the enthusiastic revival of Spinozism.

Godwin had his faults; but intellectual confusion was not one of them. He did not on the strength of his conversion to pantheism call himself a Christian. Coleridge held fast to the name, and even went on to justify it by an unimpeachable profession of orthodoxy. The year after his return to England from a Mediterranean tour (1807) he tells Cottle that he has renounced all his Socinian sentiments, and declares his deepest conviction of the truth of Revelation; of the Fall of man; of the Divinity of Christ; and of redemption alone through his blood.

It was not exactly necessary to inform the excellent bookseller in what sense these edifying phrases were to be understood; nor indeed could their esoteric meaning have easily been made intelligible to the philistine apprehension. But with another friend, Crabb Robinson, who had studied German philosophy at the fountain head, Coleridge opened himself more freely. 'Jesus Christ,' he said, 'was a Platonic philosopher. And when Christ spoke of his identity with the Father, he spoke in a pantheistic or Spinozistic sense, according to which he could truly say that his transcendental sense[2] was one

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 357–8.

[2] *Sic*; perhaps Coleridge said *self*. But the meaning is evident.

with God, while his empirical sense retained its finite nature.' Coleridge added that 'accepting Christianity as he did as in its spirit in conformity with his own philosophy, he was content for the sake of its divine truths to receive as articles of faith or perhaps I (Crabb Robinson) ought to say, to leave undisputed the miracles of the New Testament taken in their literal sense.' [1]

In the course of the same conversation Coleridge warmly praised Schiller's essay 'Ueber die Sendung Moses.' The circumstance deserves notice; for in the piece referred to Schiller not only rejects by implication the idea of a supernatural revelation, such as that related in Exodus, but he also interprets Mosaism as a popular version of the esoteric pantheism taught by the Egyptian priests to their most advanced disciples, of whom he supposes the Hebrew lawgiver to have been one.

A year later (December, 1811) Coleridge is mentioned as having just declared his adhesion to the principles of Bull and Waterland in a letter to the editor of the 'Eclectic Review.' So well known were his real views at the time that some people thought him 'hardly sincere.' Robinson does not wish to speak so harshly, but is 'altogether unable to reconcile his metaphysical and empirico-religious opinions;' believes, however, that he is only inconsistent. Had the diarist remained a few years longer in Germany and attended Schelling's Lectures on University Studies, he would have seen how the pantheistic philosophy of the sister-nation was tending in a much more outspoken fashion to make its peace with Protestant theology.

Schelling's influence, although unacknowledged, was evidently at work in Coleridge's mind, suggesting a new form of pantheism compatible with the admission of freewill. We have a scenic, almost histrionic, presentation of the change in Crabb Robinson's pages. Coleridge opens the 'Ethica,' kisses Spinoza's portrait on the face, exclaiming, 'this book is a gospel to me!' but adds, in less than a minute, 'his philosophy is nevertheless false;' epigrammatically explaining that were the fundamental truth of philosophy expressible in the form 'it is,' Spinoza would be right; whereas we begin (or ought to begin) with 'I am.' [2]

[1] Crabb Robinson's 'Diary,' Vol. I., pp. 307–9.
[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 399.

This new departure looks like a reversion to the standpoint of Descartes: in reality it is an advance to the standpoint of Fichte and Schelling, to their synthesis of Spinozism with the subjectivity of Kant, or rather of Kant's whole century, concisely expressed by Hegel when he said that substance and subject are one. Aristotle, whom Hegel quotes in this connexion, had struck out very much the same line of speculation when he set up an eternally self-thinking thought as the supreme type of existence. But Aristotle's Absolute had personality without will; the Absolute of German neo-pantheism has, or rather *is*, will without personality; for originally it is without self-consciousness. Indeed, we have hardly a right to use such words as 'is' and 'being' in connexion with it at all.

Coleridge had been prepared by his early studies in neo-Platonism for this supreme effort of abstraction, which is also the supreme consummation of mystical ecstasy. For the One of Plotinus, whence all things proceed and whither they would fain return, is above and before all being, yet has infinite power to produce being—an idea wrought out in scholastic detail and ostensibly reconciled with Christian orthodoxy by John Scotus Erigena, whom Coleridge had also studied with enthusiasm.

This task of reconciliation was greatly facilitated by the circumstance that neo-Platonism also has its Trinity, widely different indeed from the Catholic Trinity, but near enough to it for the very accommodating standards of theosophy, whether applied in the ninth century or in the nineteenth. From the One proceeds absolute Reason, or Existence in the fullest sense, having for the content of its self-reflexion the Platonic Ideas. Here Being, properly so called, first appears; for the One, as already observed, transcends Being. And from Reason, in the third place, proceeds the universal Life, the Soul of the World. After that follows the sensible material universe, descending through successive gradations until it melts into the formlessness of matter as such, which falls below Being as much as the One rises above it.

It will be observed that although the successive stages of the neo-Platonic Trinity are coeternal, the whole evolution being independent of time, they are not coequal, the second being in manifest subordination to, and of lower dignity than the first, while the third is similarly related to the second.

Neither are they persons, notwithstanding a sort of analogon to self-consciousness attributed to the absolute Reason; nor, finally, do they constitute a unity, apart from that fundamental unity involved in the supremacy of the One.

I should apologise for what looks like a digression, were it not absolutely necessary to recall these forgotten things, if we would make head or tail of Coleridge and his religion. It is important to remember what different meanings the same words may bear, when we are told that in this last conversation the poet reiterated his acceptance of all the doctrines of Christianity, 'even the Trinity.' He who comes across such declarations from lips which have kissed the lips of Spinoza, must be always asking himself how much they signify, and whose Trinity we are to understand as making the extreme limit of such a summary creed. Nor should any of the violent attacks on pantheism scattered up and down Coleridge's writings be accepted as disclaimers of that philosophy on his own account, until it has been made clear to what particular pantheism he is referring.

It may be suggested by those who set store on the poet's authority as a support for Catholic orthodoxy, that his views underwent a further development after the conversation with Crabb Robinson quoted above, and that with advancing years he came to accept Christianity in a more literal sense. Passages from his later works might certainly be adduced in support of this view, which also seems to be confirmed by a remark of Robinson's, made in 1825, to the effect that Coleridge's doctrines 'are assuming an orthodox air.' Unfortunately, however, this theory requires us to believe that he became more sincere as well as more religious in his old age; that is to say, at the very time when the temptations to outward conformity with the established religion were strongest, while the ability to resist them had been reduced to the lowest point by prolonged indulgence in opium. For the Notes on Jeremy Taylor, mostly written in 1810 for the use of Charles Lamb, are stamped throughout with the same appearance of dogmatic orthodoxy that the commentator chose to exhibit during the whole of his later career when addressing himself to uninitiated auditors. Lamb, no doubt, remained unconverted, and probably regarded the marginalia with which his copy of Jeremy Taylor was

enriched as a rather ponderous specimen of that peculiar vein of humour which he supposed to be called forth in his revered friend by the subject of supernatural religion. But to other and less cynical readers they are calculated to convey as edifying an impression as anything in their author's 'Lay Sermons' or his 'Aids to Reflection.'

As a last resource the apologist may, if he likes, throw discredit on Crabb Robinson's testimony. And assuredly reports of this kind neither do nor ought they to carry with them the very highest kind of conviction. Every one who has ever mixed in intellectual society must have noticed how easily wrong impressions are conveyed, even when the interlocutors are perfectly candid, scrupulously accurate, and quick to seize the most subtly discriminated shades of meaning. In this instance, however, we have to do with a diarist who made it the business of his life to note down the conversation of the remarkable men and women with whom he habitually associated; whose reports are consistent with the known character of the person whose opinions he relates; and who, so far as I know, has never been convicted or even accused of any serious inaccuracy.

What is more, Crabb Robinson's account seems to be confirmed by certain indications, pointing in the same direction, to be found scattered through Coleridge's later writings. They are scanty enough; and perhaps none of them standing alone would be quite cogent. But, bearing in mind the writer's habitual reticence and equivocation, there are more such than we had a right to expect; and, taken in conjunction with the evidence already furnished, the cumulative effect is considerable.

Commenting on Waterland, who, without any particular reference to the use of the word 'persona' in the Latin form of the Athanasian Creed, talks about 'the Person of the Father,' Coleridge exclaims, 'O most unhappy mistranslation of hypostasis by Person! The Word is properly the only Person.'[1] In this connexion, as elsewhere, he insists that Christ is identical with Jehovah. The Son and the Spirit, or the Word and the Wisdom, were alone worshipped because alone revealed under the Law.[2] I say nothing about the orthodoxy of this

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 182. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

rather startling assertion, which must be left for professional theologians to deal with. But I must confess that I fail to understand how the Son, being himself a revelation of the Father, can be revealed without revealing the Father at the same time. Be this as it may, the great enemy of Socinianism seems to have landed us in a new sort of uni-personal theism, with the Jewish Jehovah incarnate as Jesus left as the sole personal God. But even this personality first begins with the earthly life of Jesus, and probably comes to an end with it also. For another passage speaks about 'the incarnation of the creative Logos and his becoming a personal agent.'[1] We had learned that the Word was the only Person in the Trinity. We now learn that it only becomes personal by incarnation in the manhood of Jesus Christ. And this idea may perhaps be taken as throwing light on an obscure passage in the Essay on Church and State, where reason in its highest sense is defined as 'the Supreme Being contemplated objectively, and in abstraction from the (*sic*) personality.'[2] I think the definite article is purposely introduced so as to create an ambiguity, and to leave us in doubt whether the personality of God or of man is meant.

Later still, writing to his most trusted and devoted disciple, J. H. Green, Coleridge emphasises 'the great truth that the perfect reality is predicable only where there is no potential being, and that this alone is absolute reality . . . and the still more fundamental truth that the *ground of all* reality, the objective no less than the subjective, is the Absolute Subject.'[3] Apparently this absolute subject, elsewhere called Ipseity, is, in Christian language, the Father; while absolute reality, or reason, is the Son, and their union the Spirit; God in the most universal sense being the absolute Will or Identity. This last idea is borrowed from Schelling, doubtless under the persuasion that it was merely another name for the One of Plotinus.

Finally, in 1832, Coleridge published an extract from a poem called 'Youth and Age,' which, as first printed in 'Blackwood's Magazine,' ended with the following lines:—

> 'O! might Life cease and Selfless Mind
> Whose total *Being* is *Act*, alone remain behind!'

[1] 'Omniana,' p. 428.

[2] P. 265 (1827).

[3] 'Letters,' p. 755.

This mind, whose being is pure act, was originally the Nous or self-thinking thought of Aristotle, with whom, as with the Schoolmen, it was personal. But with Plotinus it had ceased to be personal, being, in fact, what a mathematician would call the *locus* of the Platonic Ideas; or, as Coleridge puts it, the Supreme Spirit in which all these substantially are and are one.[1] Considered as a unity this reason is the Father, considered as a multiplicity it is the Son, considered as the synthesis of both it is the Spirit. And now, as a finishing touch, we learn that it is 'Selfless.' The conviction expressed thirty years before, and really never let drop in the interim, asserts itself decisively for the last time. But the dangerous admission was quickly withdrawn, and the lines quoted will be vainly sought for in the verses as subsequently republished with Coleridge's other poems.[2] The omission does but draw attention to their profound significance, for his philosophy, his religion, and his total view of life.

We may now pass with sufficient equanimity to a consideration of the passages where Coleridge repudiates and denounces pantheism with an apparent sincerity which might deceive the very elect. 'There is, there can be,' he declares, 'no medium between the Catholic Faith of Trinal Unity and Atheism disguised in the self-contradictory term Pantheism—for everything God and no God are identical positions.'[3] And from a purely intellectualist point of view the choice between these alternatives would not be doubtful. 'The inevitable result of all consequent reasoning in which the intellect refuses to acknowledge a higher or deeper ground than it can itself supply . . . is, and, from Zeno the Eleatic to Spinoza, and from Spinoza to the Schellings, Okens, and their adherents of the present day, ever has been, pantheism under one or other of its modes, the least repulsive of which differs from the rest, not in its consequences, which are one and the same in all, and in all alike are practically atheistic, but only as it may express the striving of the philosopher himself to hide these consequences from his own mind. . . . All speculative disquisitions must begin with

[1] 'Church and State,' pp. 133–4.
[2] They will be found in Macmillan's edition of the Poems.
[3] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 181.

postulates which the conscience alone can at once authorize and substantiate: and from whichever point the reason may start, from the things which are seen to the one invisible, or from the idea of the absolute one to the things that are seen, it will find a chasm which the moral being only, which the spirit and religion of man alone can fill up. . . . This principle [is], to comprise all in one word, the method of the will.'[1]

Apparently the chasm was less easy to fill than Coleridge at first imagined; for, seven years later, we find him telling Crabb Robinson that 'atheism (*i.e.* pantheism) seeks only for an infinite cause of all things; the spurious divine is content with mere personality and personal will, which is the death of all reason. The philosophic theologian unites both.' 'How this was to be done,' adds Robinson, 'he did not say.'[2]

Meanwhile, the conviction of sin, as we have seen, had for him, more than for most philosophic theologians, an awfully pressing personal reality; and he kept preaching it as the basis of all religion with an energy worthy of an Evangelical divine, spurious or genuine. I have already quoted some strong expressions from an early letter to his brother George on the subject. His chief theological work, the 'Aids to Reflection,' reasserts the same position still more unequivocally. 'Man was and is a fallen creature, not by accident of bodily constitution, or any other cause which human wisdom in a course of ages might be supposed capable of removing, but as diseased in his will, in that will which is the true and only synonym of the word I or the intelligent self.'[3]

This is one of the three ultimate facts with which religious philosophy starts: the other two are the reality of the law of conscience, and the existence of a responsible will.[4] Then comes the redemption of sinners by the Incarnate Word as the substance of the Christian dispensation.[5] Original sin and redemption are indeed not peculiarly Christian doctrines, but are fundamental articles of every known religion professing to have been revealed.[6] And as there is no logical halting-place

[1] 'The Friend,' Vol. III., pp. 204–5. Coleridge may or may not have known that Schelling called Will (Wollen) 'the essential foundation and basis of all existence' (Werke, erste Abtheilung, Vol. VII., p. 385).

[2] 'Diary,' Vol. II., p. 273. [3] Pp. 103–4. [4] *Ibid.*

[5] 'Table Talk,' p. 203. [6] 'Friend,' Vol. III., p. 78.

between Trinitarianism and a pantheism which is equivalent to atheism, so there is none between this theory of moral evil and what we should now call agnosticism. 'All hangs together. . . . Deny Original Sin and you will soon deny freewill, then virtue and vice, and God becomes Abracadabra, a sound and nothing else.'[1]

He who finds a Christian doctrine in 'every known religion professing to have been revealed' will be apt to strip the doctrine of its specifically Christian meaning and force, volatilising it into theosophic vapour. And this is precisely what Coleridge did with Original Sin. Accepting the corruption of human nature as a fact, he rejects the received interpretation of the fact with uncompromising severity. When he wrote, all branches of Western Christendom, except the Unitarians, to whom he denies the name of Christians, agreed in teaching that the first man and woman had fallen from the state of innocence, in which they were created, by eating the fruit of a forbidden tree; and that through this act their posterity were born in a state of sin deserving eternal damnation.

Such teaching Coleridge denounces as 'the monstrous fiction of hereditary sin—guilt inherited.'[2] To believe it is to make God act 'in the spirit of the cruellest laws of jealous governments towards their enemies upon the principle of treason in the blood.'[3] But for certain passages in St. Paul most of us would believe that Adam was a myth;[4]—as no doubt Coleridge really himself believed Adam and the whole story of the Fall to be. For himself he does not pretend to explain Original Sin. He declares it to be an unaccountable fact—a mystery rooted in the wider mystery of freewill (as if it were not the precise negation of that personal responsibility for which it is assumed as the foundation), or, to speak more generally, in the mystery of individual existence.[5] He censures Jeremy Taylor for assuming that 'the consequences of Original Sin were superinduced on a previously existing nature in no essential

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 279.

[2] 'Aids,' p. 243.

[3] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 247.

[4] *Ibid.* In one of his magnificent metaphors Coleridge observes that the divines of the Reformation have thrown the darkness of storms on an awful fact of human nature which in itself had only the darkness of negations.

[5] P. 259.

respect differing from our present nature—the animal nature in man.' 'But,' he adds—and the words are highly significant —'this very nature as the antagonist of the spirit or supernatural principle in man, is in fact the Original Sin,' which 'must originate in a self-determination of a will.'[1] Surely this is the rankest Manichaeism, the heresy that matter, or what Coleridge calls the animal nature, as the principle of individuation is intrinsically evil. And it is evil because it separates us from the absolute One, which is the sole good. What was to have saved us from pantheism brings us round to pantheism once more.

Elsewhere, but in precisely the same sense, he refers to the doctrine of fallen spirits as 'the mythological form of a profound idea indispensable if we would render the existence of a world of finites compatible with the assumption of a supermundane God, not one with the world.' It is 'the condition under which alone the reason can retain the doctrine of an infinite and absolute Being, and yet keep clear of pantheism as exhibited by Benedict Spinoza.'[2] But not, we must add, from pantheism as exhibited by Plotinus and Schelling.

The darkness thickens when we pass from the mystery of sin to the still more mysterious mechanism provided for its removal by the Christian dispensation, to the doctrine of the Atonement. As ordinarily interpreted in Coleridge's time by divines of all persuasions in Western Christendom—the Unitarians, as before, being excepted—this doctrine meant that Jesus Christ, the Son of God and God himself, by his sufferings and death on the Cross, bore the punishment due to the sins of the whole human race, and in this way satisfied the righteous vengeance of the Father, thus harmonising the claims of justice with the pleadings of mercy, and reconciling God with man. On one point only was there a difference of opinion among theologians. According to some God's wrath was appeased by the satisfaction of knowing what agonies his Son had endured. According to others no such gratification was experienced by the Father; and we must look on the Passion as a theatrical performance solemnly arranged with the object of impressing on men and angels the great truth that sin cannot be forgiven

[1] P. 264.

[2] 'Miscellanies,' p. 170.

without the payment—in this case, as it happened, by an innocent party—of an equivalent penalty. All were also agreed in holding that the salvation of each particular sinner depended on his acceptance of the transfer so arranged, with this difference, that while the Evangelicals made the efficacy of the appropriation depend on a personal act of faith in the Saviour, the Roman Catholics and high Anglicans identified it rather with incorporation in the Church of Christ and submission to her prescriptions.

Coleridge could no more believe in such a scheme of salvation than he could believe in hereditary guilt. Like Sozzini, he felt his reason and conscience outraged by such a confusion between persons and things. The Unitarians protested against it, and so he became a Unitarian. On returning to the Church, he brought their arguments with him, and gave them a classical expression in his 'Aids to Reflection.' 'If you attach any meaning to the word justice,' he contends, 'as applied to God, it must be the same to which you refer when you affirm or deny it of any other personal agent—save only that in its attribution to God you speak of it as unmixed and perfect. For if not, what do you mean? And why do you call it by the same name?' He then goes on to show that while one man may discharge another man from the obligation of a money debt by paying it himself, he cannot expiate another's guilt by performing a duty which the other has neglected. It is, however, conceivable that the guilty party may be induced to repent and reform by seeing what the other has done. Still, the redemption of man by Christ's sufferings and death remains a transcendental mystery.[1]

The mystery, as I have observed on a former occasion, exists only for a mind like Coleridge's, imbued with Hellenic principles of reason and justice. To the more primitive conscience, as, for instance, to many so-called educated women among ourselves, the substitution of one person's sufferings for another's in expiation of an offence has nothing revolting or paradoxical about it. What is more, from the high mystical point of view, shared to a certain extent by Coleridge himself, such vicarious satisfaction also becomes intelligible, apparently constituting a kind of sacramental union with the All-One.

[1] 'Aids,' pp. 273–5.

And perhaps this was what he really thought about the Atonement, but feared to say openly, lest it might seem to involve an acknowledgment of the pantheism he affected to abjure.

At any rate, the admission of insoluble mysteries in religion, whether sincere or affected, is inconsistent with what Coleridge elsewhere affirms. 'The Christian to whom after a long profession of Christianity the mysteries remain as much mysteries as before is in the same state as a schoolboy with regard to his arithmetic, to whom the facit [1] at the end of the examples in his ciphering book is the whole ground for his assuming that such and such figures amount to so and so.' [2] The aphorism is translated without acknowledgment from Lessing's 'Education of the Human Race;' and Coleridge's sole example of how a mystery can be rationally explained is derived, equally without acknowledgment, from the same source. 'An intelligent Creator,' he argues, 'must have had coeternally an adequate idea of himself in and through which he created all things both in heaven and earth.' [3] Never has a more unwarrantable assumption passed current as self-evident truth. Nor has Lessing's assertion even the relative value of elucidating a historical process of thought. His interpretation of the Logos throws no light on what it meant for early Christianity. This can only be ascertained by a careful study of Philo Judaeus, who knows nothing of the Logos as a necessity of the divine self-consciousness, but has much to say about it as an intermediary between God and the world.

Lessing, however, as a pre-Kantian thinker, and not very profound at that, could give Coleridge but scanty assistance in the construction of a religious philosophy. From the beginning of the century on, Kant and Schelling were his chief guides in metaphysics, grudging as were his acknowledgments of their assistance. Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason' completed the work begun, even before his visit to Germany, by Berkeley's 'Principles of Human Knowledge,' in liberating him from the bondage of Hartley's and Priestley's materialism. It gave him

[1] I believe this word occurs nowhere else in the English language. It is common in German.

[2] 'Omniana,' pp. 427–8.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 431.

the vital distinction between noumena and phenomena, the spiritual world of reality and the apparent world of sense. In close conjunction with this it gave him also the distinction, which figured so largely in his Highgate conversations, between the objective and the subjective. And finally it gave him the distinction, now more closely associated than any other formula with his own teaching, the famous distinction between the Reason and the Understanding.

One of Coleridge's younger hearers, with a great appetite for short telling phrases, seized on this last distinction, immortalised it in a literary masterpiece, and gave it a world-wide notoriety. 'Coleridge,' says Carlyle in bitter disillusioned irony, 'Coleridge knew the sublime secret of believing by the "reason" what the "understanding" had been obliged to fling out as incredible.'[1] But the author of 'Sartor Resartus,' while intellectually the most powerful of the young men who gathered round the sage in those last years at Highgate, had perhaps the least aptitude of them all for philosophy, for pure abstract thinking. His passionate hold on concrete facts, his passionate impatience for definite practical results, disqualified him as much for that as they qualified him for writing picturesquely moralising history. In this instance, at any rate, he falsifies both the letter and the spirit of the master's teaching. Coleridge tells us that 'there can be no contrariety between revelation and the understanding; they do not address themselves to the same order of facts.'[2] And again: 'I would raise up my understanding to my reason and find my religion in the forms resulting from their convergence.'[3] Once more: 'The understanding says that this *is* or ought to be so, the Reason says it *must* be so.'[4] On the other side I can only find a single passage. 'Faith is but an act of the will assenting to the reason on its own evidence without, or even against the understanding.'[5] And this, as we shall see, relates rather to practice than to belief. For the rest, Coleridge, when he criticises particular beliefs, uses much the same methods as the free-thinkers of the preceding age.

Still, it is not intended for a moment to deny that Coleridge

[1] 'Life of Sterling,' p. 53.
[2] 'Aids,' pp. 156–7.
[3] 'Church and State,' p. 183.
[4] 'Table Talk,' p. 14.
[5] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 77.

did attach enormous importance to the existence of these two faculties, and to the supposed antithesis between their respective functions. And our examination of his attitude towards religion and rationalism demands an attempt more searching than has as yet been made to elucidate this part of his philosophy. The enquiry is a difficult one, and necessitates a brief historical sketch of the distinction in question.

Plato, in his 'Republic,' distinguishes between two mental faculties, which he calls respectively Nous and Dianoia, words which it is customary to translate by Reason and Understanding. By the latter we apprehend the truths of mathematical and physical science; by the former the ultimate and absolute realities on which these depend. The inferiority of merely scientific truths is due to two causes: they involve a variety of unproved assumptions; and their objects are, so to speak, adulterated with an admixture of unreality in the shape of a material or sensible embodiment. In modern parlance, the geometrician assumes space; the physicist assumes mass and motion; the astronomer assumes a number of bodies of definite size moving through space, and so forth. But none of them has shown that these things *must* be; they are, as we say, assumed on the precarious evidence of the senses. A perfect philosopher, a true noetic, would assume nothing, and would demonstrate *a priori* the necessity of all that is. Plato himself did not attempt the task, but pointed to it as an ideal goal for his successors to attain.

Aristotle adopted Plato's distinction, but presented it under a simplified form, and stripped of its transcendent implications. According to his view, reason apprehends the simple concepts of which judgments are made up; understanding puts the terms together, and frames propositions which may be either true or false, whereas reason asserts nothing but the presence of a concept to the mind as its object, like the presentation of an image to the eye, a fact of itself admitting no mistake. Thus reason supplies the first principles of demonstrative science, higher than which we cannot ascend, and which cannot be conceived as being other than they are. When consequences are deduced with logical accuracy from such first principles, so as to form a chain of demonstrative reasoning, Aristotle calls

both the result of the process, as science, and the faculty by which it is accomplished, Epistêmê. On the model of this word both the German word Verstand and its English equivalent, understanding, seem to have been formed. Its operation is sometimes distinguished from that of Nous as discursive from intuitive reasoning. Thus St. Augustine, as quoted by Sir William Hamilton, 'seems to view Reason as the faculty of intuitive truths, and as opposed to Reasoning,' which he defines as 'an effort of thought to pass from certainties to the investigation of what is uncertain.'[1] And, as Hamilton also points out, the distinction became long ago so familiar to the French language that Molière introduces it into his 'Femmes Savantes.'

So the subject remained until Kant gave it a new interest and a new interpretation by his criticism of Pure Reason, some account of which has been offered in a former chapter. In his system Reason retains her old prerogative of introducing us to things in themselves, to the unconditioned and transcendent objects which sense and understanding cannot reach. But her position is purely honorary and titular. There is no guarantee for the real existence of the things about which Reason professes to inform us. What we do know is revealed by understanding working in combination with sense. For neither of these two would be of any use without the other. Understanding (Verstand) supplies the Categories or ways of putting together the loose materials of consciousness, by which alone the most ordinary experience and the most elaborate scientific constructions are made possible. But these categories have no meaning or value except as applied to objects presented under the forms of space and time. Empty them of that content and their action becomes the idle working of machinery *in vacuo*. To put the same conclusion a little differently, all knowledge is limited to experience, and experience is limited to phenomena. But what appears to us appears under the forms of space and time; and Kant proves, or attempts to prove, that space and time have no existence apart from our perceptions: they are simply our ways of arranging the things of sense, at once bringing them together and holding them apart. Had previous philosophers been aware of this very simple fact, they would not have puzzled themselves over insoluble metaphysical

[1] 'The Works of Thomas Reid,' p. 768.

problems. To ask whether the world is finite or infinite, or whether it has or has not been created in time, is to assume that existence forms a sum-total, and that, apart from our consciousness, it may be conceived as extended and enduring. Starting on this false assumption, it is no wonder that we soon become involved in contradictions. One chain of reasoning proves that the world is finite, another that it is infinite; a third that it has been created, a fourth that it has existed from all eternity. All are equally cogent, and none has any real value whatever. And the proofs offered by theologians of the soul's immortality, as also of the existence of God, are equally illusory. These three Ideas of the world, the soul, and God, or the Supreme Being, are not objects of experience but products of the Reason. Still, while adding nothing to our knowledge, they have their value in summing up and systematising it. And criticism, after all, leaves the religious question open. If God and immortality cannot be proved, neither can they be disproved. To accomplish either feat, we should get outside ourselves.

I need not now repeat how Kant found, or fancied he found, a way out of this theoretical scepticism by means of his system of practical postulates—in other words, by a peculiarly puzzle-headed mixture of intellectual and ethical ophelism; for Coleridge never seems to have attached much importance to this part of his philosophy. Nor need we recur to Fichte, whom he treats with unmerited, perhaps ignorant, contempt. Passing at once to Schelling, we find that to this most versatile and poetic of German thinkers the obligations of the English poet were at once the greatest and the most grudgingly acknowledged—if, indeed, they were acknowledged at all. We have seen how Kant's agnosticism followed as a necessary consequence from his opposition of the subject to the object in knowledge. Schelling overcame this antithesis by declaring—one may almost say by decreeing—their identity. Within the sphere of consciousness the process is accomplished, or rather accomplishes itself, with engaging simplicity. For when the self knows itself, the knower and the known are evidently one and the same. Here the subject is object to itself. And we know our fellow-men as other selves by the analogy of our own self. The difficulty begins with the inanimate world. We are

apt to think of this as an object for us without consciousness, without subjectivity of its own. Schelling insists that it has such a consciousness, that there is a soul of nature, that the whole process of cosmic evolution is one of self-realisation, ascending from the simplest elements of space to the highest creations of the human mind. This ascent is accomplished through a series of triads with subject, object, and the identity of both as their constant terms.

Coleridge wrote a very creditable exercise in this sort of card-house building, published several years after his death under the title of the 'Theory of Life.' It possesses some historical interest as having apparently suggested to Herbert Spencer his theory of organic evolution as a process of increasing individuation and diminishing reproductiveness, the two varying inversely as one another. In this instance Coleridge seems to have really improved on his original, combining and making more definite the rather vague and incoherent aperçus which Schelling himself had borrowed to a great extent from the naturalist Kielmeyer.

But Schelling's pseudo-scientific cobwebs counted for little in the mind of his English follower as compared with his reinterpretation of reason, or rather his return to the old Platonic interpretation of it as the one absolute reality. When subject and object are identified, the chasm between noumena and phenomena is filled up, and Ideas, so far from counting as subjective illusions, acquire paramount importance as revelations of things in themselves. Being products of Reason, they represent, or rather *are* themselves the highest realities. Thought creates its own objects; for things are in the deepest sense thoughts. They exist because they have the power to think themselves out.

Coleridge does not seem to have risen to this speculative height until after many years of study; for in 1817 we still find him distinguishing between reason and understanding in an Aristotelian rather than in a Platonic sense, while the Kantian sense is quite ignored. According to his exposition in the 'Friend,' reason gives us clear conceptions, it may be of spatial relations, such as a point, a straight line, or an enclosed figure; or it may be of moral ideals, such as justice and

holiness.[1] Reasoning in the secondary sense consists in perceiving whether the conceptions so furnished do or do not contradict one another; as when we judge that two straight lines cannot enclose a space.[2] Understanding is apparently synonymous with reasoning or inference, whether applied to the notices furnished by the outer sense, the phenomena of perception, or to the invisible realities revealed to that organ of inward sense which we call reason. But while the comparison of concepts, from whatever source they may be derived, properly belongs to the understanding, the highest regulative principle of thought belongs to the pure reason, and to that alone. This principle is the famous Law of Contradiction, the axiom that contradictory predicates cannot coexist in the same subject.[3] So far we remain well within the sphere of Aristotle's logic.

When Coleridge offered these explanations his leading interest seems to have been practical rather than speculative. His object was not to exhibit the constitution of things in themselves, but to establish the reasonableness of moral conduct; reason being understood, in the highest sense of the term, as the vision of spiritual realities, of what they involve, and of what they exclude. It had been held unreasonable for a man to pursue anything but his own advantage, to sacrifice himself to others, or to duty in the abstract, except for the purpose of gaining some compensatory pleasure either in this world or in the next. Virtue was identified with prudence. But to Coleridge nothing seemed more irrational than such logic, which confounds disinterestedness with self-interest, and subordinates the general to the particular instead of the particular to the general. It cannot be right for me to do or to leave undone what I should think it not right for another person placed in the same circumstances to do or to omit. Here moral science has the same certainty as geometry, and draws it from the same source, from pure reason. Not that reason is a motive to action. Its function is to illuminate conscience, or the sense of moral responsibility, by which alone the moral will can be set in motion.[4]

At this stage of his speculative evolution Coleridge lays

[1] 'Friend,' Vol I., p. 233.
[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 210–11.
[3] *Op. cit.*, pp. 208–9.
[4] *Ibid.*

down a principle from which he never afterwards swerved. Reason is not only the vision of spiritual realities, but is also those realities themselves. 'God, the soul, etc., are the objects of reason, but they are also themselves reason.'[1] It would, therefore, seem justifiable to say that reason is God. An attempt to evade the obvious consequence by calling him the Supreme Reason[2] would be futile, for there can be only one reason. As a knowledge of the whole, and as identical with its object, it must *be* the whole. Nor would the subterfuge of treating it as something introduced into the soul from without and irradiating it with supernatural light prove any more successful. For reason is also identified with conscious self-knowledge; so that by a not very extended series of equations God works out as the consciousness of ourselves. In short, he is only personal when we supply the personality.[3]

Coleridge very probably saw that his Graeco-German philosophy was once more leading him straight back into the pantheism which at one time he unquestionably accepted, but the imputation of which in his later years—the years of political reaction—he so carefully avoided. One sees the attempt at a backward step in his later analysis of the two great intellectual functions, reason and understanding. Henceforth their provinces are much more rigidly separated than in the above-quoted essay. According to the view taken there, understanding could combine into judgments the spiritual elements supplied by reason no less than the images of ordinary sense; but at a later period it is denied that power. Understanding, we are told, 'concerns itself exclusively with the quantities, qualities, and relations of particulars in time and space.' It is 'the science of phaenomena and of their subsumption under distinct kinds and sorts.'[4] Its sphere, in short, is the sphere of conceptual logic.[5]

These definitions show that the guidance of Aristotle has been exchanged for the guidance of Kant. But Kant would have been alarmed to hear that 'all logic and all logical

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 124.
[2] 'Church and State,' p. 264.
[3] *Ibid.*; Southey's 'Life of Wesley,' Vol. II., p. 91, Coleridge's note.
[4] 'Church and State,' p. 258.
[5] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 217.

conclusions are inherently unreal and inconsequent.'[1] Such a phrase reminds one of that 'supercilious tone in philosophy,' whose beginnings in his own lifetime the old master had regretfully occasion to observe. However, Coleridge does well to put us on our guard against logic, for reason—reason in the true sense, of course—seems to be a singularly illogical faculty, and none the worse on that account. As expounded in the 'Friend,' one of its functions was to keep contradictory conceptions apart. We now learn that it gives us intuitions which can only be expressed by contradictory conceptions.[2]

We have, perhaps, an example of this remarkable legerdemain in the alleged power which reason gives us as self-consciousness 'of contemplating the self as an IDEA loosened from the sensation of ONE'S own self as the I am'—James, John, etc.[3] And so when the noumenal is identified with the subjective as the only true reality, we must be on our guard against confounding this with mere Personal Idealism, that is, with the doctrine that reality consists in an aggregate of more or less conscious minds. That is what the inconclusive logic of the understanding might infer; but to the higher reason this subject, while remaining the foundation of all consciousness, is yet divorced from consciousness and identified with the object.[4]

Thus we begin to see what Coleridge means by the pregnancy of 'the doctrine of opposite correlatives as applied to Deity, but only as manifested in man, not to the Godhead absolutely.'[5] In man the universal reason implied by self-consciousness is correlated with the opposite consciousness of an objective world, from which he distinguishes himself as a finite being: in God as the Absolute there is no such opposition.

This pantheistic interpretation of reason in the Coleridgean sense is abundantly verified by the definitions scattered through

[1] 'Life of Wesley,' Vol. II., p. 259. Coleridge may have derived this idea from Hegel. There is a copy of the 'Wissenschaft der Logik' (1812) in the British Museum, with annotations in his handwriting. They only cover the first division of Part I. (Quality); and as the leaves after this are often uncut, it seems likely that he read no further. But in what he did read there is quite enough to suggest that Reason is a faculty for combining contradictory conceptions. The notes are unfortunately not dated.

[2] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 330.

[3] 'Life of Wesley,' Vol. II., p. 91.

[4] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 324.

[5] 'Church and State,' p. 265.

the works of the Highgate period. It is 'the knowledge of the whole considered as one . . . the science of the universal having the ideas of oneness and allness as its primary factors;' and it first manifests itself by the tendency to the comprehension of all as one.[1] 'By reason we know that God is, but God is Himself the Supreme Reason. . . . In its highest sense reason is being, the Supreme Being contemplated objectively and in abstraction from the personality.'[2] Again, we learn that prescience and 'freewill are nothing more than the two contradictory positions by which the human understanding struggles to express successively the idea of eternity—not eternity in the negative sense as the mere absence of succession, much less eternity in the senseless sense of an infinite time; but Eternity—the Eternal, as Deity, as God.'[3]

The human understanding must have felt considerably surprised at being told that it meant something so remote from what the terms involved in its debates about prescience and freewill seem to imply. But the mystery clears away to some extent if we interpret the two contradictory positions as really standing for the order of mechanical causation under the name of prescience, and human personality under the name of freewill. In the new pantheism God, or the Eternal, is the synthesis of both, that is of the soul and the world, or, in transcendental language, the absolute identity of subject and object.

It may be urged that whatever doubtful and dangerous expressions Coleridge was betrayed into by the exigencies or the temptations of pure theory, he became a good theist and a fairly orthodox Christian when subjected to the wholesome restraints and responsibilities of a religious and moral teacher. Thus, when we find him declaring that 'pantheism, in whatever drapery of pious phrases disguised, is (where it forms the whole of a system) atheism, and precludes moral responsibility, and the essential difference of right and wrong';[4]—so frank a confession seems to set the question at rest. Unfortunately here also we must bear in mind the sort of writer with whom we have to deal, a master of the most impalpable distinctions and the subtlest equivocations, a slothful, pusillanimous dreamer, in

[1] 'Church and State,' p. 258.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 265.
[3] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 330.
[4] *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 263.

whom sincerity, if it ever existed, had been destroyed by the use of laudanum. Of this habitual tampering with the value of words for the purpose of conveying different senses according to the needs of the moment, the very passage just quoted offers a striking exemplification. It goes on to specify the doctrine of positive creation as 'the surest criterion between the idea of God and the notion of a *mens agitans molem*;' being, as such, characteristic of the Hebrew Revelation. Yet elsewhere he tells us that it is inconceivable how anything can be created in time;[1] while, as a kind of link between the two statements, on another occasion still he interprets the account of the creation in the first chapter of Genesis as seeming clearly to say: 'The literal fact you could not comprehend if it were related to you, but you may conceive it as if it had taken place thus and thus.'[2] Conceive it, that is to say, after an inconceivable manner! Was ever before such a hash of contradictions served up as the dictates of oracular wisdom?

Let us now go on to examine how moral responsibility and the essential difference between right and wrong, assumed to be incompatible with pantheism, are rehabilitated in the new orthodoxy of Highgate. We look in vain for any indication of the part played by a personal God in enabling us to realise these all-important conceptions, but, on the contrary, much that points away from ordinary theism. What really comes to the rescue is our mysterious friend Reason. In a passage, of which part has been already quoted, this Proteus appears under the form of self-consciousness, as the power of determining an ultimate end. What the simple act of self-contemplation has to do with ends of any kind, ultimate or otherwise, is by no means obvious at first sight. But on turning our thoughts back to the purely metaphysical side of Coleridge's philosophy, we shall be reminded of the part played by self-consciousness in that connexion. It then appeared as a revelation of unity in diversity, suggesting the idea of an Absolute, embracing all existence, and constituted by God as its impersonal subject. The relation to practice becomes a little clearer in the light of this implication. For the ultimate end referred to is then seen

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 142.
[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 267.

to be the surrender of our individual wills to that universal Will, which, being the very essence and secret of our unifying personality, is yet concealed and confused by its phenomenal manifestation: nay, more, this individual manifestation is an act of revolt from the All-One.

Nevertheless, this unifying power given in self-consciousness is itself a dangerous snare, and suggests to Coleridge another and more explicit interpretation of the Fall. It will be remembered that understanding works within the limiting forms of space and time. Therefore it conceives infinity as endless extension or duration. And such endlessness cannot, so to speak, be totalised: it can be unified in parts, not unified as a whole, for that would amount to bounding what by definition is boundless. Still, the rational instinct is there, suggesting the unification of such materials as are offered to it by experience. And this instinct, according to Coleridge, formed the original temptation through which man fell.[1] In more philosophical language, the natural man either loses the one in striving after the infinite—that is atheism, with or without polytheism; or he loses the infinite in striving after the one, and sinks into anthropomorphic monotheism.

In a previous chapter of this work I have called attention to the isolating and dispersive character of Spinoza's philosophy, its affinity on the religious side with atheism rather than with pantheism. Coleridge perhaps detected this affinity; and his repudiation of Spinozism, which, from the absolutist point of view, was perfectly logical, must not be confounded with an acceptance of the 'anthropomorphic monotheism' which he equally rejected. On an earlier occasion, when his pretensions to orthodox churchmanship were less developed, he had branded the belief in a personal God, simple or triune, as the worst form of original sin. We now see how the same association of ideas continued to shape the expression of his theology in its final and more guarded stage.

Returning to Coleridge's practical philosophy, we are met by a somewhat more embarrassed and ambiguous oracle. 'The understanding is the faculty of means to such ends as are themselves means to some ulterior end.'[2] 'The reason alone can present ultimate ends. Ultimate ends are called, in relation

[1] 'Church and State,' p. 258. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 63.

to the reason, moral ideas. Such are the ideas of the eternal, the good, the true, the holy, the idea of God as the absoluteness and reality . . . of all these, or as the Supreme Spirit in which all these substantially are, and are one: lastly, the idea of the responsible will itself; of duty, of guilt.'[1]

Five years before, in notes not intended for publication, Coleridge had presented the idea of reason as convertible with the idea of God, and as including the idea of freewill, which surely is identical with that 'responsible will' now left outside the divine choir. But such an exclusion cannot possibly be maintained in face of the reiterated declarations that reason is identified with its own objects and with God as their fundamental unity. We are therefore driven to the rather startling conclusion that moral guilt, as an idea of the reason, is contained in God,—an unexpected confirmation of the reconciling sentence—

> 'O Thou that didst the serpent make
> Our pardon give and pardon take!'[2]

Would the sage have waved aside this proffered exchange as an impertinence of the logical understanding, or tolerated it as an attempt to express the inexpressible and inconceivable by two contradictory positions, or welcomed it as letting in some light on the ultimate mystery of the Atonement? We cannot tell; but we know that the higher mysticism would not shrink from the last solution.

All has now been said that can be said with profit about Coleridge's famous distinction between reason and understanding. A close examination of his meaning does but confirm what other evidence made highly probable, namely, that his pantheism continued through life. We have now to enter on the allied topic of his distinction between belief and faith, between the intellectual assent to propositions and the process by which religious facts are apprehended so as to effect a transformation of the converted soul. It is a distinction which has

[1] 'Church and State,' pp. 133–4.

[2] Mrs. Pearsall-Smith, in her work on 'the Unselfishness of God,' quotes these lines as an inscription on a tombstone. They are, in fact, abridged from a quatrain of Omar Khayyam, composed by Ed. Fitzgerald himself.

survived to the present day, and is found most valuable by theologians who are conscious that their pretensions are incompatible with the logic to which all truths, except those of religion, are amenable. Here also the luminous and sincere thought of Greece will help us to disentangle the interested sophistry of modern apologetics.

In the philosophy of Plotinus we find a symmetrical correspondence between the speculative and the practical sides of his system. The whole universe descends in a series of graduated emanations from the superessential One to the most indefinite forms of material existence. And, conversely, the human soul, when awakened to the consciousness of its divine origin, endeavours, by rising through a methodised series of virtuous exercises, to regain the pristine elevation whence it has descended, and again to become one with the One. Coleridge has not left on record whether he ever touched that ecstatic consummation in his opium-dreams; but his religious ideas, when they become practical, remind us in a fragmentary and disjointed fashion of the neo-Platonic scheme. 'Religion,' he says, 'is the consideration of the individual as it exists and has its being in the universal.'[1] And just as Schleiermacher had interpreted faith in the sense of an emotional surrender of the individual, feeling himself in unison with the whole, so Coleridge interprets it more practically as a submission of the particular will to the universal and absolute Being, the impersonal Reason. 'It is,' he declares, 'the identity of the reason and the will (the proper spiritual part of man) consequent on a divine rekindling';[2] 'a total act of the whole moral being,' whose 'living sensorium is in the heart';[3] or, again, 'an act of the will assenting to the reason on its own evidence, without, or even against, the understanding,'[4]—which must here be taken in a purely practical significance as selfish prudence, the sordid calculation of a Panurge or a Sancho Panza in contrast with the chivalrous disinterestedness of a Pantagruel or a Don Quixote; or, again, as the base cunning of Swift's Yahoos.[5]

We can now understand why Coleridge used to insist so

[1] 'Church and State,' p. 258. [2] 'Life of Wesley,' Vol. II., p. 81.
[3] 'Biographia Literaria,' Vol. I., p. 122.
[4] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 77. [5] 'Miscellanies,' pp. 111, 127, 128.

much on the distinction between belief and faith;[1] and what he meant by declaring that 'religion has no speculative dogmas'; that 'all is practical, all appealing to the will, and therefore all imperative.'[2] And in the light of such aphorisms we know what to make of another and apparently contradictory assertion, dating from 1816, that he considered the belief in God and immortality as a duty arising from his sense of responsibility.[3] For this obligatory belief in immortality must be taken, subject to the rejection of endless time as a senseless absurdity, and subject also to the positive interpretation of the time-form (borrowed from an earlier Kantian treatise), as a phenomenal manifestation of the divine eternity; so that immortality would mean no more than a conscious life in God, given through the identification of reason and will. So when, in words already quoted, he tells us that there can be no contrariety between revelation and the understanding, this surely does not mean that understanding is to pick up again what in Carlyle's energetic language it 'had flung away as incredible.' Rather does it imply the silent elimination of all such incredibilities by their conversion into symbols of a higher truth. And lastly, by insisting that 'the undivided faith of Christ demands man's understanding equally with his feelings,'[4] he is not protesting against free philosophical speculation, but against Evangelical obscurantism.

The tendency to base religious belief on ethical or emotional considerations, which in the first chapter of this work I discussed under the general head of ophelism, has indeed no greater enemy than Coleridge; although his infirmity of purpose has sometimes permitted him to drift in that direction. 'To assign a feeling or a determination of will as a satisfactory reason for embracing or rejecting this or that opinion or belief is,' he admits, 'of ordinary occurrence.' Yet to him it seemed 'little less irrational than to apply the nose to a picture, and to decide on its genuineness by the sense of smell.[5] He notices in passing 'the weakness of the argument (not, alas! peculiar to the sophists of Rome, nor employed in support of Papal infallibility only) that this or that must be because sundry

[1] 'Table Talk,' p. 189.
[2] 'Omniana,' p. 419.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 429.
[4] 'Church and State,' p. 365.
[5] 'Aids to Reflection,' p. 4.

inconveniences would result from the want of it.'[1] And commenting on the advice given by Boehler, the Moravian, to Wesley, when the future evangelist of England confessed his dislike to preaching to others when he had no faith himself, 'Preach faith till you have it, and then because you have it you will preach faith,' he asks, is not this too like, 'tell a lie long enough and often enough and you will end by believing it; and yet,' he adds, with his usual tendency to equivocation, 'and yet much may be said where the moral interest of mankind demands it and reason does not countermand. Or where the Scripture seems openly to assert it.'[2]

He does not explain how the moral interests of mankind can be served by habitual and systematic falsehood; nor how Scripture can have any weight with those who lack faith. But the whole passage is important as indicating (i.) an attitude of conscious insincerity on Coleridge's part where religion is concerned; and (ii.) complete subordination of religion to utility; together with (iii.) a reinterpretation of its doctrines in the light of transcendental idealism.

How or to what extent religion, and more particularly the Christian religion, is instrumental to morality, Coleridge has nowhere explained; nor yet what he means by redemption from sin by the cross of Christ; nor what, after all, was in his opinion the office of Jesus as an individual agent. Some hint may perhaps be found in his rather startling assertion that God the Father was first revealed by Jesus. The Father, as we know, is the superessential Good, the mystic One of Plotinus. What the incarnate Word then revealed was the substantial unity of things, the love which turns duty into delight. And we may suppose that this unity was revealed in the life no less than in the teaching of Jesus, in the absolute subordination of his individual will to the will of the Father, that is, of the supreme good, terminating with the surrender of his personal existence to the fountain-head whence it came. But Christ, having died to outward sense, returns to life in his Church, of which we become members through faith, gaining from it the consciousness of our unity with the whole. This is not a

[1] 'Church and State,' p. 138.
[2] 'Life of Wesley,' Vol. I., p. 131.

unity realised by yielding ourselves up to the animal instincts through which we merely co-operate with the mechanical order of nature. It is the unity implied in the exercise of reason through which we recognise our identity with the noumena, the unseen reality of things, distinct from, yet supporting the phenomenal world, the shows of sense. Understanding, when subordinated to reason, interprets natural phenomena as symbols of that conceived reality, revealed most of all in the personal will, in the 'power to say I am I.' And this, Coleridge would perhaps say, is the true meaning of Christ's real presence in the sacramental bread and wine. The words, 'this is my body,' had no special reference to those objects; they merely served as representatives of all nature, which is the body or external representation of the Logos, even as our reason is its inward presence to the will.

The Church of Christ, as a world-wide spiritual community, transcends all limitations of space and time. Questions about its chronological continuity and local habitation at any particular moment are 'without interest for an enlightened Protestant of the present day.'[1] On the other hand, 'a Christianity without a Church exercising spiritual authority is vanity and dissolution.' And Coleridge believed that some day the English nation would be taught this to its cost by the rapid spread of Popery.[2] In a note not intended for publication he uses still stronger language. Commenting on a saying of Donne's, that 'we have a clearer, that is a nearer light than the written Gospel, that is the Church,' he exclaims, 'True; yet he who should now venture to assert this truth, or even contend for a co-ordinateness of the Church and the Written Word, must bear to be thought a semi-Papist or an ultra high-Churchman. Still the truth is the truth.'[3]

As usual, 'the truth' must be understood in a Coleridgean sense. Evidently the object is not to strengthen authority, but to weaken it by transferring its seat from a book whose declarations are comparatively fixed and precise to a body whose composition and jurisdiction may be made to vary at the discretion of individual Churchmen. The historic Church has never

[1] 'Life of Wesley,' Vol. II., p. 95; 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 12.
[2] 'Aids to Reflection,' p. 243.
[3] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 86.

claimed to be more than the interpreter of that Written Word which this divine would subordinate, or at least not make superior, to her. Yet, curiously enough, this privilege of interpretation is elsewhere denied to the Church, or superseded by what is practically a boundless latitude of private judgment. On the question of Biblical inspiration a truly Catholic Christian admits no authority 'as coercive in the final decision but the declaration of the Book itself';[1] and the full-grown Christian needs no other creed than the Scriptures themselves.[2]

The passages just quoted deserve particular attention. Taken in connexion with the whole trend of his teaching, they prove beyond dispute that Coleridge was not what Carlyle calls him, 'the parent of spectral Puseyisms and ecclesiastical chimeras.' In this respect the great leader of the Oxford Movement, little as he knew about the writings of the Highgate sage, showed himself much better informed than the rival prophet. Newman saw with the intuition of genius, and hit off with careless felicity of expression, the real drift of what Coleridge thought and taught in describing him as one who 'indulged a liberty of speculation which no Christian can tolerate, and advocated conclusions which were often heathen rather than Christian.'[3] We have seen what these heathen conclusions were. We have seen that they were in truth a revival of neo-Platonism, reconstituted on the lines of Kant's criticism as developed into the absolutism of Schelling. The new 'reason' ostentatiously distinguishes itself from the old, but it exercises the same destructive action on religious belief; and the thing called faith, which is put in place of that belief, is simply obedience to the moral law conceived as deriving a mystical authority from the fundamental oneness of nature.

We have now to take Coleridge at his face-value as a professing Christian, and to show how in this character, to repeat Newman's words, he indulged a liberty of speculation which no Christian, as Christianity was then understood, could tolerate. It was on this side, much more than by his heathen philosophy, that he influenced English religion; and here also

[1] 'Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit,' p. 15.
[2] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 151.
[3] 'Essays,' Vol. I., p. 269.

the influence of Germany on his thoughts will appear as a conspicuous factor.

One of the first uses that Coleridge made of his knowledge of German was to read Lessing's controversial tracts, and also the fragments of Reimarus published by Lessing. From the latter he borrowed the word Bibliolatry as a contemptuous designation for the belief in Biblical infallibility, a notion which he stigmatised as 'if possible still more extravagant than that of Papal infallibility.'[1] When in Germany he also studied the written notes of Eichhorn's Lectures on the New Testament, besides making himself acquainted, then, or at some other time, with the same critic's views on Old Testament prophecy.[2] His whole stock of modern Biblical criticism seems to have been drawn from these few sources. Such as it was, however, in the general ignorance of German research then prevailing, it gave Coleridge a position of higher authority than any contemporary English writer on theology, except Bishop Marsh, could claim, and he turned it with incalculable effect against the traditional beliefs.

As has already been mentioned, Coleridge refused to accept Biblical inspiration on any authority but that of the Biblical writers themselves; their guarantee being understood to extend no further than the portions for which they were severally responsible. He found such a claim advanced by the writers of the larger part of the Prophetic books, and of the whole of the Apocalypse. These, he said, should be accepted as inspired truths, or rejected as enthusiastic delusions.[3] The alternative, however, must not be taken too seriously; and the specified portions of Scripture are to be regarded as a maximum rather than as a minimum of concession to popular religion; for, according to an admission dropped elsewhere, he 'does not know what to make of the Apocalypse,'[4] and therefore lets it alone—probably a polite way of classing it with Esdras or Enoch.

Among the Hebrew prophets he touches but slightly on the

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 154.

[2] Campbell's 'Life of Coleridge,' p. 97. 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 333, where he ungraciously calls Eichhorn an 'infidel.'

[3] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 191.

[4] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., pp. 131–2.

two test cases of what is now called the later Isaiah, and the Book of Daniel; and here his utterances suggest an economy of the truth. He will neither affirm nor deny the early date of the Cyrus prophecies; he both affirms and suggests a denial of Daniel's authenticity. Our judgment, as regards the latter, depends very much on our interpretation of the fourth empire. To identify this with Macedon is practically to give up the book as a prediction of the Christian dispensation, and therefore to deprive it of all value as a weapon in the armoury of Christian apologetics. And when that interest is removed, the weight of argument for its apocryphal character is felt to be irresistible. As usual, Coleridge is weak and shuffling. 'Is it quite clear,' he asks in one place, 'that the Macedonian was not the fourth empire?'[1] While in another place he argues that for a Macedonian writer to omit the Roman empire would be 'strange and inexplicable.'[2] At last, however, in disgust and alarm at Edward Irving's insane interpretations of prophecy, he gave a decisive adhesion to the modern view.[3]

Passing from the Bible as a miraculous anticipation of the future to the Bible considered as a narrative of past events, designed for our edification, we find Coleridge departing widely from the beliefs accepted by his pious English contemporaries. The Pentateuch is indeed unhesitatingly ascribed to Moses, but on grounds which make us doubt the critic's seriousness. 'One striking proof of the genuineness of the Mosaic books is that they contain precise prohibitions of all those things which David and Solomon actually did.'[4] The fact is indubitable; but it so irresistibly suggests an exactly opposite conclusion as to make one suspect either that the young clergyman who reports the words misunderstood their meaning, or that Coleridge was indulging in what Lamb might have called a little fun at his nephew's expense.

Middleton's views on the Fall, so much decried in their time, are reproduced by Coleridge. The second chapter of Genesis from verse four, and the third chapter, are to his mind as evidently symbolical as the first chapter is literal.[5] Literalism, however, does not mean the quality of representing things as

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 132. [2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 333.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 345, where, however, Daniel is not named.
[4] 'Table Talk,' p. 79. [5] 'Miscellanies,' p. 397.

they really happened, for 'it is inconceivable how anything can be created in time;'[1]—or indeed how anything can have been created at all.[2] Like Adam, Noah is a myth, or, as Coleridge expresses it, a representative man; which explains (one does not quite see how) the remarkable fact that no remains of prae-diluvial civilisation have been discovered even in the wilds of America.[3]

Jael, so highly praised by the prophetess Deborah, is held up to odium by Coleridge as a treacherous assassin,[4] and her action branded as a detestable murder; while the execution of Saul's descendants by David is with equal propriety described as one of his worst actions;[5] although it was to all appearances performed with Iahveh's full approval. The two instances are typical; if such deeds lie open to criticism, nothing in the historical books of the Old Testament can be exempt from it; and Coleridge would no doubt have permitted himself, had occasion offered, the same latitude of invective against any atrocity committed either by Israel as a nation or by any of its divinely commissioned leaders.

A disposition to welcome the dawn of the higher criticism may be observed in Coleridge's 'Table Talk.' He would rather call the Proverbs Solomonian than actually by Solomon.[6] He cannot believe Ecclesiastes to have been actually composed by Solomon.[7] He would conjecture that both books were written, or perhaps rather collected, about the time of Nehemiah.[8]

His utterances on the New Testament Canon are far more serious, and, from Newman's point of view, justify Newman's censure to the fullest extent. Coleridge rejects what he calls the Christopaedia, that is, the narratives of the birth of Jesus from a pure virgin, prefixed to the Gospels bearing the names of Matthew and Luke. The contradictions between these two

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 142.

[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 267.

[3] 'Miscellanies,' p. 307. I suppose this is a cryptic way of saying that there never was a deluge.

[4] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 344. Archdeacon Wilberforce, a theologian otherwise in full sympathy with Coleridge, referred to her last July in the pulpit as one of the glories of her sex.

[5] 'Aids to Reflection,' p. 227.

[6] P. 34. [7] P. 33. [8] P. 188.

narratives are, he observes, palpable, and have been fruitful of doubts respecting the historic value of the Gospels themselves. The story of a virgin-birth was unknown to or not recognised by the Apostles Paul and John. John's silence is an almost overwhelming argument against its apostolicity. Coleridge can readily believe that Christ's having an earthly father might be requisite to his perfect manhood. The opposite view, so far from supporting the doctrine of the Trinity and the Filial Godhead of the Eternal Word, if not altogether irreconcilable with this faith, greatly weakens and bedims its evidence. But if asked whether he believes our Lord to have been the Son of Mary by Joseph, Coleridge takes refuge in his usual agnostic hiding-place, and declares that it is a point of religion with him to have no belief one way or the other.[1]

For the rest, Matthew's Gospel, as we have it, is not the earliest but the latest of the four; and under Coleridge's very free handling the comparison between the Son of Man and Jonah is summarily removed from the text as a gloss of some pious though unlearned Christian of the first century.[2] There seems no reason why other passages should not be disposed of, when occasion requires, by the same convenient method.

We seem to find a brilliant anticipation of Renan in the characterisation of early Christian Jerusalemite communism as 'a very gross and carnal, not to say fanatical, misunderstanding of our Lord's words,' which 'had the effect of reducing the Churches of the Circumcision to beggary, and of making them an unnecessary burthen on the new Churches in Greece and elsewhere.' Hence it is difficult to accept the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira as a miracle.[3] The gift of tongues does not imply an acquaintance with foreign languages.[4] The Epistles to Timothy and Titus, soon to figure so largely as authorities in the Tractarian argument, are only Pauline, not by Paul.[5] There are serious difficulties besetting the authenticity of both the Epistles ascribed to Peter.[6] The Apocalypse, as already noticed,

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 73; Vol. II., pp. 154 and 210; and 'Confessions,' p. 134.

[2] 'Church and State,' Appendix C, p. 285.

[3] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 232.

[4] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 125.

[5] *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 197; 'Table Talk,' p. 253.

[6] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 344.

is let alone—a phrase which, when used by Coleridge, may without rashness be interpreted as amounting to total rejection.

Less ceremony is observed in speaking of the devil. That personage is 'a mere fiction, or at the best an allegory, supported by a few popular phrases and figures of speech used incidentally or dramatically by the Evangelists.' For, indeed, the existence of a personal intelligent evil being, the counterpart and antagonist of God, is in express contradiction to the most express declarations of Holy Writ.[1] 'The dogma of a personal Satan is an accommodation to the current popular creed which they (Peter and Paul) continued to believe.'[2] And their language about the Day of Judgment may perhaps be similarly explained away.[3] Angels fare no better than devils. Spirits are not necessarily souls or I's.[4] Augustine has observed that reason only requires three essential kinds—God, man, beast; and it is no matter to us whether angels are the spirits of just men made perfect, or a distinct class of moral and rational creatures.[5]

Coleridge, in fact, for all his professions of attachment to the Church, was essentially a heretic, believing or disbelieving just what he chose, and just as much as he chose. Whatever 'found' him, as he puts it, brought with it an irresistible evidence of having proceeded from the Holy Spirit. Such credentials are, of course, not limited to the Bible. In a novel by Thomas Hughes, a disciple of Maurice, and therefore indirectly a disciple of Coleridge, a young man on the very point of succumbing to temptation is 'found' and rescued by a passage in the 'Apologia' of Plato; and in his earlier days, at least, the master would have admitted that Plato was as much 'inspired' as St. John.[6] So also nothing that contradicts Reason is to be believed; though how a principle essentially self-contradictory can itself be contradicted does not appear.

[1] 'Miscellanies,' p. 158.
[2] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 318.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] 'Miscellanies,' p. 171.
[5] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 261.
[6] I hope it will be understood that this reference is not made with the object of throwing any doubt on the orthodoxy of the author of 'Tom Brown at Oxford.'

Anyhow, whatever may be its justification, we have seen to what lengths the license of disbelief may be pushed.

'The full-grown Christian needs no creeds.'[1] Not only does he not need them, but under the guidance of Reason—or of Coleridge—he will pick holes in all three. The Apostles' Creed insists on the Virgin-birth, which it is a matter of religion with our critic to leave doubtful. The Resurrection of the Body is explained away by calmly asserting that the word body, as used by St. Paul and his Master, means the personality.[2] At this rate a more advanced Christian—Tolstoi, for instance—might explain personality to mean the never-ending consequences of a man's actions. In the Nicene Creed homöousios is not to be translated 'being of one substance with';[3] apparently because that wording makes the notion implied slightly more definite than it would otherwise be. As for the so-called Athanasian Creed, it is downright heretical on account of its omission or implicit denial of the Filial subordination in the Godhead.[4] What this or any other Creed tells about a future life left Coleridge quite unconcerned. When he discusses the punishment of the wicked it is with reference chiefly to one's own feelings and the practical effect of this or that view on men's conduct; his own leaning being towards annihilation.[5]

It remains to consider in what relation this comprehensive thinker stood to the various theological tendencies of his own and of the following age. Sir Leslie Stephen tells us that his brother Fitzjames, who ended with complete disbelief in Christianity, was in early life much affected by the arguments of Thomas Paine, but felt comforted by an impression received from his father that 'Coleridge and other wise men had made a satisfactory apology for the Bible.'[6] And Professor Goldwin Smith, when still in what he has since called 'the penumbra of orthodoxy,' recorded his persuasion that 'Coleridge rather than Butler has been the anchor by which the intellect of England

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 151.
[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 150.
[3] *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 190.
[4] 'Table Talk,' p. 45.
[5] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., pp. 253 and 265.
[6] 'Life of Sir J. F. Stephen,' p. 84.

has ridden out, so far as it has ridden out, the storms of this tempestuous age.[1] The foregoing account of Coleridge's theology—even discounting what I believe to be its fundamentally pantheistic character—will perhaps convince an impartial reader that this 'apology for the Bible' was one rather in the sense contemplated, not without some feeling of scandal, by George III., than in the original Greek sense of a complete exculpation of the defendant. Indeed, it hardly amounts even to that. For whenever Coleridge touches on the points attacked by Paine, he practically throws up the case for his client. The story of the Fall is a myth; there never were any such persons as Adam and Eve; never any personal devil, in the form of a serpent or otherwise. No defence of the atrocities denounced by Paine is attempted; while the epithets affixed to the crimes of Jael and of David imply full agreement with the moral standard set up in opposition to Scriptural authority. Principles of criticism equivalent to Paine's are applied to the birth stories of the Gospel, and with the same destructive result. The theory of inherited guilt, and the theory that God's wrath against man was appeased by the suffering and death of his innocent Son, seem no less immoral to the apologist than to the infidel. And a casual reference to the *apparent* contradictions in the threefold narrative of the Resurrection[2] makes it probable that Coleridge had a white flag in his pocket ready to be run up over that position also.

Whether all these surrenders were particularly helpful to the Church is another question. At any rate, Professor Goldwin Smith's nautical metaphor seems rather inappropriate to the services rendered, if any. So far from supplying a new anchor for the ecclesiastical ship, Coleridge slipped the existing cables and steered her into the unknown waters of the German Ocean.

If Coleridge's theological position betrays marked affinities with the rationalism of Paine, it stands in equally marked opposition to the ruling and rising orthodoxies of the age. There is no mistaking his attitude towards Paley. It is one of bitter and contemptuous repudiation. The refurbished argument for theism from final causes did not appeal to a thinker whose education, begun in the school of Hume, had been completed

[1] 'Rational Religion,' p. 77.

[2] 'Notes, Theological, Political, etc.,' p. 120.

in the school of Kant. 'I could make a slashing review of the "Natural Theology,"' he writes in 1803.[1] Nor can the 'Evidences' have been more to his taste. Paley founded the credibility of Christianity on miracles attested by the report of men whose veracity was guaranteed by their willingness to suffer martyrdom on its behalf. Coleridge holds that the truth through Christ has its evidence in itself; and he observes that 'the supernatural relations even of the very best and most veracious men' ought to be received with extreme caution.[2] To Paley the practical importance of Christianity consisted in the sanction it gave to moral conduct by the revelation of a future state of rewards and punishments. To Coleridge such a reference seemed the destruction of morality itself, the degradation of duty to the level of selfish calculation. The dictates of the moral law might indeed coincide with the suggestions of self-interest, but only as the movement of the sun in heaven is reflected by the shadow of the dial's gnomon which indicates its path by intercepting its radiance.

With the Evangelicals, on the other hand, Coleridge felt himself in far closer sympathy; and theirs perhaps is the only contemporary school to which he never places himself in avowed antagonism. Like them, he finds the very essence of Christianity in the recognition of human nature as fundamentally sinful, and in the revealed necessity for its redemption from sin by the intercession of the Incarnate Word. Like them, he appeals by preference to the self-evidencing truth of the Gospel. Like them, he declaims against Popish superstition, and glories in the name of Protestant. And so long as Christianity was limited to the enunciation of such generalities, they might have been content to accept him as a genuine believer. But from the moment that a more expanded statement and a more detailed definition of the faith is required, a divergence between their respective interpretations begins which can only end in accusations of wilful blindness on one side and of veiled infidelity on the other. To specify the points of disagreement would be merely to recapitulate the whole of the previous analysis, and more particularly to repeat what has been said of Coleridge's concessions to Paine. And, apart from differences on technical points of theology, few Englishmen could have

[1] 'Letters,' p. 424. [2] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 43.

been more out of sympathy with such an ignorant and illiterate party as the Evangelicals then were than the great poet, critic, and metaphysician, with his splendid literary, philosophic, and scientific culture, his restless intellectual curiosity, his genial sympathy with 'all thoughts, all passions, all delights,' and his identification of the best prayer with the widest love for animated things.

It seems strange that Newman, while summarily denouncing Coleridge's teaching as heathenish, should still include it among the antecedents of the Oxford Movement, thus giving a sort of indirect sanction to Carlyle's unscrupulous association of the two directions. For, whether viewed as a charge or a claim, the derivation can only be admitted with restrictions which deprive it of all specific value. Doubtless the author of 'Aids to Reflection' and 'Church and State' did much to encourage that spirit of serious piety, that renewed interest in theological studies, of which the 'Tracts for the Times' were the most far-shining, but neither the sole, nor the first, nor the most enduring manifestation. What they stood for would certainly not have won Coleridge's approval even in its beginnings, while its last consequences would have incurred his dread and hatred. How little was implied by his affected deference to Church-authority has already been shown, and what havoc his criticism made with the Scriptural authority to which the Oxford leaders in their first stage invariably appealed. If his philosophy gave an apparent support to their favourite dogma of the Real Presence, it countenanced the Lutheran no less than the High Anglican view, and agreed best of all with a purely pantheistic interpretation of nature. As to their other great shibboleth, the dogma of Baptismal Regeneration, his opinion of it stands recorded in language of exceptional decision. 'The assertion that what is phenomenally bread and wine is substantially the Body and Blood of Christ does not shock my common sense more than that a few drops of water sprinkled on the face should produce a momentous change, even a regeneration, in the soul; and does not outrage my moral feelings half as much.'[1] And he sarcastically asks the literalists why, if they appeal to the words of Scripture, have they assumed the right to substitute sprinkling for total immersion?

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 329.

Coleridge's opposition to the Tractarians appears still more irreconcilable whenever we have an opportunity of comparing his views on religious history with theirs. He explains the spread of Christianity neither by the direct interference of Providence, nor by the propaganda of a wonder-working Church, but in a way still more philosophical than Gibbon's, in a way that even anticipates Renan, by pointing to the destruction of local patriotism and local worships by Roman imperialism, with the consequent necessity for replacing them by a universal religion.[1] Towards the Fathers he is not more respectful than Middleton. Unlike Jeremy Taylor, he will not allow the title of Saint to Cyprian. Augustine is more honoured; but the least of such Reformers as Luther, Melanchthon, and Calvin is not inferior to him, and worth a brigade of Cyprians, Firmilians, and the like.[2]

Towards Rome Coleridge shows the violence of a whole Orange Lodge. He rebukes the Anglican dignitaries who spoke of the Roman Church in contrast with the Protestant Dissenters as 'a right dear though erring sister.'[3] It is full of superstition and imposture. The Papal monarchy is 'the trunk circulating a poison-sap through the branches successively grafted thereon.'[4] Roman Catholic countries are given up to the most despicable and idolatrous superstition.[5] 'If the Papacy and the Romish hierarchy as far as it is Papal be not Anti-Christ, the guilt of schism in its most aggravated form lies on the authors of the Reformation.'[6]

Needless to say that Coleridge absolved them of any such guilt. For him the Reformation is 'ever-blessed.'[7] Luther is in parts the most evangelical writer he knows after the Apostles and apostolic men.[8] His views of English history anticipate Froude and Carlyle. Sharon Turner has succeeded in detaching from the portrait of our first Protestant King (Henry VIII.) the layers of soot and blood with which pseudo-Catholic hate and pseudo-Protestant candour have coated it.[9] On the other hand, the High Church movement under the first

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 230.
[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 351.
[3] 'Church and State,' p. 143.
[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 131.
[5] 'Confessions,' p. 143.
[6] 'Church and State,' p. 145.
[7] 'Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton,' p. 202.
[8] 'Table Talk,' p. 47.
[9] 'Church and State,' p. 55.

Stuarts is so far from appealing to his sympathies that he represents its leaders as combining the obnoxious features of the two religious bodies which in later life were the chief objects of his detestation. Montague, Laud, and their confederates represent the spirit of a conjoint Romanism and Socinianism.[1] Charles I. is 'an imbecile would-be despot;'[2] Cromwell a hero who 'gave a thousand proofs of his attachment to the best interests of human nature.'[3] He and Ireton had as good a right to put Charles to death as Hampden had to defend himself against the King in battle.[4] The great Commonwealth's men are the stars of a narrow interspace of blue between the black clouds of the first and second Charles's reigns.[5] The great body of Nonconformists to whom Baxter and Calamy belonged were not willingly dissenters from the established Church, but an orthodox and numerous portion of the Church.[6] The royal and prelatical party in the reign of Charles II. were 'a bestial herd;'[7] James II. was 'a wretched bigot.'[8]

Among the manifestations of a reactionary spirit on the part of modern High Churchmen nothing has been more noticeable than their insistence on the observation of saints' days. But here also Coleridge would have refused to follow them. He is so far a Puritan as to think nothing would have been lost if Christmas and Good Friday had been the only week-days made holy-days, and Easter the only Lord's day especially distinguished.[9]

After all these successive eliminations there remains one section of religious society in England with whom the gifted thinker from whom we must now take leave can be fully and frankly identified, one tendency to which his seemingly wasted efforts communicated at the decisive moment an irreversible impulse, atoning for his ruined life, and opening the way for

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 116.
[2] 'Life of Wesley, Vol. I., p. 129.
[3] 'English Divines, Vol. II. p. 13.
[4] *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 97.
[5] 'Church and State,' p. 102.
[6] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 116.
[7] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 331.
[8] 'Miscellanies,' p. 203.
[9] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 88.

achievements so vast that in their fame his fame has been swallowed up. With all his dislike for the Stuart Latitudinarians, Coleridge was, in fact, the real founder of their modern representatives, the Broad Church, including under that heading not only the theologians, clerical and lay, who have openly adopted and gloried in the name, but also those who, like Maurice, and in a very different line of thought, James Martineau, abjuring all sectarian distinctions, have been content to class themselves as Churchmen or Christians without epithets. The group of distinguished scholars and divines who, even before his death, began to draw away from the Evangelical and Tractarian parties alike, Arnold, Hare, Thirlwall, Maurice, and John Sterling, were all either his disciples or his admirers; and their tradition was continued by Stanley, Jowett, Kingsley, and Robertson; while for every stage in the development of the school some hint or precedent or germ may be found in the recorded utterances of the master. Like him, they have protested, although as a rule with less violence, against any return to the yoke of authority and tradition. Like him, they have appealed from the theological fashions of the hour to the doctrinal standards of a more philosophic age. Like him, they have welcomed the application of modern methods to Biblical criticism. And finally, like him, though not until more than one generation had passed since the prime of his middle life, which also was the period of his most complete emancipation from mythological imagery, or what he would himself have called the original sin of idolatry, they have tended with increasing clearness to resolve all dogma into a symbolical representation of the ideal universe to which the distinctions of space and time do not apply. In carrying out this transformation they also have followed the track of German idealism, with the difference that their guide has not been Schelling, but Schelling's far more logical, systematic, and consistent successor, Hegel, not unknown to Coleridge himself, but first revealed to England at large not long after Coleridge's death by his young disciple Strauss' 'Life of Jesus,' and afterwards studied at first hand with ever-increasing ardour in the two great English Universities. Unhappily the idealistic interpretation of theology, whether as manipulated by Coleridge himself or by his English followers down to the close of the nineteenth century, has

always carried with it a certain taint of insincerity, much less strongly marked, if present at all, in the German school, where it was originally practised. It was clear enough to any one who chose to open his eyes that Hegel rejected whatever had been known before his time as religious belief; and even had the master's utterances been more ambiguous, there was no mistaking the consequences drawn from them by his disciples of the left wing. Among ourselves the relations between Hegelianism and theology have been more equivocal; some of the school have left it doubtful whether or in what sense they retained any religious belief; while others whose private opinions were no secret have studiously avoided giving expression to their total rejection of the popular creed.

In estimating the moral value of such reticences charges of prevarication must not lightly be entertained even by those to whom circumstances have granted the rare felicity of speaking out their whole mind without disguise. We have to recall the delicate and complex conditions, unknown to any other European country, under which new ideas have to be propagated in England if they are ever to get a hearing at all. We have to recall the continual reference of thought to practical issues, the continual interference of half-educated persons, as in old Athens, with controversies the windings of which they cannot follow, but the real gist of which they often seize with the almost intuitive sagacity of men trained in legal contests, in politics, or in business. Theirs is what Coleridge would have called the logic of the Understanding as opposed to the logic of the Reason; and they would carry away a totally false impression if the negations implied in certain philosophies of religion were laid before them in a clear and summary compendium. The thinkers whom they denounce as hypocrites or dissemblers are content to be judged by the highest moral standard; but that means a standard which takes every relevant circumstance into account. They assert that Christianity as a regenerating force has always operated on a basis of idea and feeling rather than on a basis of fact, or if of fact, then fact lifted on to a higher plane by an ideal interpretation of its content. When their official position is challenged, the narrowness and presumption of their assailants does not permit them to explain, as they well might explain, with Coleridge, that the endowments of the national Church are

really a fund for the sustentation of the progressive element in the nation, for moral training, and unremunerative intellectual research. And if they cared to recriminate they might tax their opponents with assuming a not less extensive right of private judgment in explaining away whatever appears inconsistent with their favourite tenets in the traditional doctrine and discipline of the Church. For in truth comprehensiveness cannot exist without a certain ambiguity and equivocation of which all parties in turn take advantage. It has become a commonplace to repeat this of the Anglican Church; but it is really applicable to any church claiming the name of Catholic; nor can the smallest sect hold together without a similar elasticity and relative freedom.

May we not go further still and contend that Christianity itself, and not Christianity only, but all religion, is a compromise, an embodiment of the mystic spirit in mundane conditions? To none should this be more intelligible than to ourselves, seeing that compromise is the pervading fact of English history, and has not for the first time been applied to English religion in the nineteenth century. What that century first did was to make the spirit of compromise self-conscious and avowed. But the forms of compromise, like the positions between which they mediate, vary to infinity. It was Coleridge's merit to have sketched an arrangement of the kind between the rationalism of Hume and the religiosity of Wilberforce, which, with some inconsiderable modifications, has been found available for a whole school of thought during the seventy years that have elapsed since his death.

CHAPTER VII

UTILITARIANISM AND ROMANCE

COLERIDGE spent his last years surrounded by admiring listeners; and, as I have said, he traced beforehand the path which the advanced religious thought of England was destined for generations to pursue. Nevertheless, his teaching as a whole was accepted by none; in general philosophy he founded no school, and left no successor. Accidental circumstances, combined with individual temperament, had not allowed his vast intellect to co-ordinate into a single coherent system the immense variety of interests over which it ranged at will. Nor was this the only drawback to his influence on English thought. If he was before his contemporaries in speculative theology, he lagged far behind them in practical politics. He professed to represent the aristocratic liberalism of Cromwell and Milton; and in opposing Catholic Emancipation he certainly reproduced one side of it faithfully enough. But in discountenancing Parliamentary Reform, the abolition of West Indian slavery, the new Poor Law, and the remission of taxation, he had the sanction of no great names in earlier English history; his attitude can only be accounted for by a blind dread of change as such, or by helpless submission to the more resolute conservatism of his friend Southey. On these points his more discriminating, though not his least ardent, admirers were in sympathy with the school of Bentham rather than with him. And it was by combining with the germinal ideas of that school that his own best ideas were fertilised and developed into fruit.[1]

Bentham's school, known also as the English Utilitarians and the Philosophical Radicals, was, even before it came under

[1] Compare the essay on Coleridge in Mill's 'Dissertations and Discussions,' Vol. I.

Coleridge's influence, a very complex growth, not by any means representing a single homogeneous body of doctrine worked out by one commanding intellect. What people called Benthamism rather resulted from the convergence of various tendencies drawn together by a temporary community of aims, but not necessarily connected in principle, and quite capable of breaking into mutual hostility when the causes of their provisional alliance had ceased to operate. As a collective body the school has become intimately associated with the old political economy taught by Adam Smith, Malthus, and Ricardo, and also with the extreme democratic opinions held by radical politicians in England before and after 1832. Yet Bentham himself was not primarily a political economist, but a legist and a law reformer; although one of his most brilliant and successful productions, the 'Defence of Usury,' is devoted to continuing and amending the work of Adam Smith. Nor in the earlier and better period of his intellectual activity was he a democrat. Brought up a Tory, he disliked the American revolutionists, and wished the Allies success in their crusade against French Jacobinism. Indeed, like some of his Continental contemporaries, he at first looked on an enlightened autocracy as the readiest means for carrying his philanthropic schemes into effect. The resistance of the privileged orders to those schemes afterwards led him to turn for support to the unenfranchised masses, whose interests seemed to coincide more nearly with the demands of a theory which made the greatest happiness of the greatest number the ultimate criterion of right conduct. But at no time did he admit that the majority had a natural right to exercise sovereignty over the whole community; it was indeed a cardinal point with him that natural rights of any sort were a mere figment; nor had nature herself, as a half-personified metaphysical entity, any place in his system or his regards.

Here we touch on the fundamental point of distinction and future divergence between Benthamism proper and the old political economy with which it has sometimes been inaccurately identified. The French economists, from whom Adam Smith took his cue, set out with the idea of a fundamental antithesis between nature and man, inherited from the earliest Greek moral philosophy, embalmed in Roman

jurisprudence, and brought to the front by the revived study of Stoicism in the seventeenth century. According to this idea, the whole universe is a vast system of means and ends, constructed for the attainment of the happiest and most perfect order by the smooth and silent working of unconscious agencies.[1] Man, or rather civilised man, alone offers a melancholy exception to this beneficent arrangement. Under the sinister influence of kings, priests, and conquerors he has departed more and more widely from a primitive state of felicity. His boasted arts and sciences have served as ministers to luxury, luxury has bred disease, and disease has been still further aggravated by the artificial remedies applied to its cure. At the same time designing impostors have practised on his ignorance and filled his mind with superstitious terrors, substituting the degrading fiction of a so-called revelation for the sublime truths of natural religion. To escape from such manifold miseries only one course remains—fortunately for us the simplest and easiest imaginable. Follow nature: study and imitate her laws; return to primitive ways of living, or at least train your children in them if it is too late to begin yourself; take lessons from the wild animals and from savage tribes; do your share of manual labour towards providing the necessaries of life; all will then go well and every one will be happy.

This theory of Natural Law fell in to some extent with the old English individualism as expounded by Locke in his 'Treatise on Government.' According to the philosopher of Whiggism, civil society originated in a general agreement by virtue of which human beings brought their natural rights with them into the community, parting only with as much as was necessary to secure the remainder against aggression. In other words, the sovereign has no right to take more from the people in taxes than is needed to pay the expense of protecting life and property against domestic and foreign assailants.

Such a view tends to restrict the functions of government within the narrowest possible limits; and we are all familiar with it under the name of *laissez-faire*. But Locke foresaw none of the extreme consequences to which it would be pushed

[1] Compare Matthew Arnold's great sonnet, 'One lesson, Nature, let me learn from thee!'

by his modern successors. His object was to provide a philosophical basis for the resistance to Stuart absolutism, not to expose the immorality of state-education or of industrial protection. But his influence doubtless co-operated with the theory of natural law in inspiring the first attacks of the French economists on administrative interference with what seemed the natural course of manufacture and trade. We owe to them the phrase *laissez-faire;* but originally it meant no more than that industrialists should be allowed to manufacture their goods as they thought fit; that a well-meaning but ill-advised Minister should not send inspectors up and down the country with instructions to tear off the loom every strip of cloth not made in strict accordance with the regulations of a fussy and perhaps interested administration. Similarly with their other great watchword, *laissez-passer*, always closely associated with *laissez-faire*. It by no means implied a demand for world-wide free-trade, but only the modest petition that the internal trade of France should be liberated from vexatious tolls, and that grain in particular should be let pass without artificial hindrances from one French province to another.

But while Quesnay and the other French physiocrats, as they were called, gave this new and important extension to Locke's theory of individual liberty, they did not share his horror of absolute government as such. In accordance with the French autocratic tradition, they persuaded themselves that an absolute hereditary monarchy, less hampered even than that of Louis XV., was the best possible instrument for safeguarding individuals in the possession of their inalienable rights; or, to use a still more metaphysical expression, for promulgating and enforcing the law of nature. Thus they left open the possibility of a very active and searching interference with individual liberty on behalf of the alleged general interest, including a new protectionism, wiser perhaps than Colbert's, but not less fatal to personal initiative, and a state-education having for its object to model the minds of the whole people on a single pattern. Indeed, the very fact of their taking China as the model of how an empire should be governed shows to what developments the theory of natural rights, as interpreted by an absolutist tradition, might lead.

When the study of political economy spread from France

to Great Britain a new era began, not only for the history of trade, but also for the history of liberty. Principles derived from Locke, but transformed into new types by adaptation to a Continental environment, speedily reverted to the parent stock when restored to their original habitat. In a country where individualism and self-reliance had always been encouraged, and where government had long been an object of suspicion rather than of confidence, *laissez-faire* acquired a new meaning, more extended than that belonging to the French words as first applied. The phrase came to connote a censure on all state-interference with private business as meddlesome and mischievous. And although much less was said about nature, the idea of nature as a guide really dominated to a greater extent in Britain than abroad; just as the English park was much more like a wilderness than the Continental garden.

With Quesnay following nature meant ascertaining by a study of the world about us and of its laws what conduct is most conducive to health and happiness; and natural right meant liberty to pursue the course so ascertained. Such liberty only belongs to the wise and good, and can only be granted to those whom the tutelary authority in the state is pleased to regard as such. With Adam Smith and his disciples, on the other hand, nature means the totality of impulses and instincts by which the individual members of a society are animated; and their contention is that the best arrangements result from giving free play to those forces, in the confidence that partial failures will be far more than compensated by successes elsewhere, and that the pursuit of his own interest by each will work out in the greatest happiness of all. Increasing division of labour is the very law of developing industry; and it is through the division of labour that every one finds an opportunity for the exercise of his peculiar faculties, to the enormous benefit both of himself and of the community. And as there is a division of labour between individuals, so likewise there is a division of labour between nations. The inhabitants of each country naturally tend to produce what its soil, climate, and geographical position, co-operating with their own genius, permit them to turn out in the greatest abundance. Hence the arrangement dictated by nature is that no obstacle should be placed in the way of their supplying one another with the

commodities which are most needed in the one place and manufactured to the most advantage in the other. In a word, free labour should be accompanied by free trade.

While the public interest is best served by the unfettered activity of each person acting singly, assemblages of persons pursuing the same industry are apt to band together for the public detriment. Evidently the government will not be free from this tendency; and therefore the best constitution seems to be that in which the various interests making up the community are represented in proportion to their relative numbers and importance. In accordance with this principle, English political economists have generally been favourable to the democratic side.

Bentham agreed with Adam Smith, and indeed with nearly the whole body of eighteenth-century thought, in holding that men are mainly actuated by a regard for their own interest, conceived on the average as the largest pecuniary profit obtainable with the smallest trouble and risk. But while Adam Smith was chiefly engaged in studying cases where the interest of the individual went hand in hand with the interest of the community, Bentham was chiefly engaged in studying cases where their interests were opposed. As a law-reformer he found himself in conflict with two classes, very unlike in their social status, but not unlike in the extent and virulence of their predatory activity. These were the criminal classes and the legal classes. The criminals appeared as open enemies of the community; the judges and lawyers, under pretence of shielding it against wrong, perverted the whole machinery of legislation and judicial procedure into a means for filling their own pockets, thus becoming a permanent drain on its resources as well as a dangerous encouragement to the law-breakers. Bentham's object was therefore to reorganise the machinery in such a way as to bring the interests of these two sets of persons, now actuated by sinister interests, into coincidence with the general interest, to make it impossible for any one to promote his own happiness without at the same time promoting the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

With such an object in view, Bentham's attitude towards nature could not but be widely different from that of Adam

Smith and the economists generally. He was not for letting things alone, but for continually interfering with them, readjusting their relations, and giving them new directions. Various existing laws, no doubt, had to be repealed; but many more new laws had to be enacted; a variety of anti-social actions, hitherto committed with impunity, had to be forcibly restrained; while virtuous actions, hitherto entrusted to the precarious support of public opinion, benevolent sentiment, and religious hopes, were henceforth to be encouraged by the more certain and substantial rewards which a public-spirited legislature would provide. In this way Benthamism seemed to promise an immense extension rather than a restriction of the functions of government—possibly ending in a benevolent despotism even more thorough-going than that foreshadowed by Quesnay on the model of Chinese mandarinism; for Quesnay still acknowledged the sanctity of natural rights, whereas rights had no natural or independent existence in the Benthamite ethics. They were creatures of convention, means—it might be merely provisional means—for attaining the sole absolute end, that is, the greatest possible happiness of all sentient beings. For Bentham, even more than for Burke, the revolutionary declaration of the Rights of Man was a mere string of anarchic fallacies.

Yet unreasoned and inconsistent with experience as the assumptions of the revolutionists appeared, law reformers, like all other reformers, had more to hope from an alliance with them than with their reactionary opponents, even if these had been able to lay down the maxims of expediency with as much wisdom and eloquence as Burke. The age of enlightened despotism had closed in blind terror at its own success. Democracy must in its turn be enlightened, or all hopes of progress were vain. At this crisis in the development of his system, Bentham was joined by a young Scottish journalist, possibly of less intellectual power than himself, but of deeper philosophic culture, far manlier character, much wider knowledge of the world, and gifted, above all, with a commanding personal influence, an aptitude for management, for dealing with other minds, totally wanting to the utilitarian chief. Bentham, no doubt, had a personal charm, a magnetism of his own, as Coleridge had also; but, like the magnet, though

he could draw and hold, he could not wield; men willingly worked for him, but he does not seem to have directed them in their work. That James Mill—for it is of him I speak—should consent to act and to be known as Bentham's lieutenant was honourable to both, but more to the younger than to the elder philosopher, whose childlike petulance he bore with a dignity and fortitude which his naturally impatient and haughty temperament must have made doubly difficult to maintain.

James Mill is justly celebrated, both for his own writings, and even more as the father and educator of his school's future chief. But his immense services to utilitarianism, and through it to English thought in general, have never yet received adequate recognition. There can be little doubt that he first brought it into line with the democratic movement. There can be no doubt at all that before making Bentham's acquaintance he was already an ardent Liberal, in the political sense of the term. When or how he became such is not known with precision. But it seems highly probable that the enthusiasm excited by the French Revolution had at least a share in his conversion. At Edinburgh the eloquence of Dugald Stewart excited his admiration to the highest pitch; and Stewart's sympathies were with the reforming party. In London he rates Fox as the 'foremost man in the House of Commons by many degrees;'[1]—although, as an orator, not to be compared with the Scottish professor.[2] Bentham, on the other hand, was, as I have said, a Tory, who wished the Revolution to be put down by force of arms. But in 1817 he comes out with a reform catechism, advocating practically universal suffrage, vote by ballot, and annual parliaments. There seems, then, every probability that his conversion was effected by James Mill, with whom he had lived on terms of the closest intimacy during the nine preceding years. To Mill, at any rate, is due the famous 'Treatise on Government,' published in 1820 as a supplement to the fifth edition of the 'Encyclopaedia Britannica,' which first gave a philosophical foundation to the Radical creed, and long continued to embody the official programme of its school.

[1] Bain's 'Life o James Mill,' p. 43.

[2] Macvey Napier's 'Correspondence,' p. 27.

To James Mill also belongs the credit of having associated utilitarianism with the teaching of political economy, selecting for its purposes what was long to remain the standard form of economical doctrine. He was the connecting-link between Ricardo and Bentham; Ricardo's great work was brought out through his urgency and encouragement;[1] and its principles were forthwith adopted by himself and his friends.

Another point, rather neglected by previous historians, but one whose importance will, it is hoped, be appreciated by readers of this work, is the Hellenising tendency of Mill's mind, his enthusiasm for the ethical spirit of classical antiquity. As a student at Edinburgh we find him a devoted reader of Plato, in days when Plato was looked on as an unpractical dreamer, or, worse still, as the creator of a mystical theology; and his Greek scholarship was such as to suggest his being put forward as a candidate for the Greek chair at Glasgow. He certainly succeeded in imparting a good reading knowledge of the language at a very early age to the son whose education he undertook. Whether these studies 'imbued him,' as his biographer thinks probable, 'with the democratic ideal of government,'[2] may be doubted—Plato's influence, at any rate, would have a directly opposite tendency—but they certainly did him the much more valuable and needful service of awakening an enthusiasm which seems beyond the power of modern literature to communicate. Reviewing Fox's unfinished 'History of the Revolution of 1688,' Mill dwells particularly on its moral tone, comparing it, in this respect, with the works of Greece and Rome, to the disparagement of most modern historians, the perusal of whom their coldness makes a task. The ancients, unlike the moderns, lay the greatest stress on the lessons of morality in their conception of history; and it is well known that they excel in celebrating public spirit as a high virtue.[3]

It was no doubt with a view to indoctrinating him with the same sentiments that James Mill gave the classics, and especially the Greek classics, so large a place in the education of his son and destined successor. Nor was the result inadequate to the highest expectations he could have entertained. His whole life long the younger Mill was glowing through and

[1] 'Life of James Mill,' p. 153.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 35.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 102.

through with an ethical enthusiasm which, as some think, remained unsatisfied by the ideals of the school in which he grew up. And he also has left on record, in language more passionate than his father's, the same exalted estimate of the services rendered to humanity by Greece and Rome as sources of stimulating instruction. Sketching the outlines of an ideal education, he insists on the large place that should be given in it to ancient literature: 'because it brings before us the thoughts and actions of many great minds . . . related and exhibited in a manner tenfold more impressive, tenfold more calculated to call forth high aspirations, than in any modern literature.'[1] And he repeats the same recommendation of Hellenic studies more than thirty years later in his St. Andrew's Address, dwelling more particularly on 'the enthusiasm both for the search after truth and for applying it to its highest uses,'[2] which Plato has such an incomparable power of communicating to his readers.

Another pupil of James Mill's, George Grote, was animated through life by the same passion for Hellenism; and was enabled by circumstances to propagate it with more success than any other member of the school, perhaps more than any other English writer of the century.

Bentham himself had no such love for classic literature. Although he was bred a scholar, and possessed of high literary gifts, his private tastes led him by preference to music rather than to poetry, and to the physical sciences, especially chemistry, rather than to the history of mankind. If anything could be learned from the ancients—which seemed doubtful enough—it might, in his opinion, be learned with more advantage from translations than from the original text. Science, not literature, is given the foremost place in his model system of education, as the most useful acquisition; and much of the younger Mill's eloquent protest against this narrow view of utility may be read as a direct advocacy of his father's system in opposition to the system of his father's reputed master.

In this way utilitarianism, which had hitherto been only remotely connected by descent with the Renaissance, was brought into living communion with the classic humanism

[1] 'Dissertations and Discussions,' Vol. I., p. 202.
[2] 'Inaugural Address,' p. 33.

which had been, in its first inception, the very soul of the great movement known under that name. We may even say that the young Puritan from Edinburgh brought with him an appreciation of the true spirit of Hellenism as a moral force, a power making for righteousness, unknown to those earlier scholars who had approached it more from the artistic or the purely intellectual side, as a deliverance from Christian asceticism. That battle had been fought and won, and the time had now come to profit by the lessons of higher spiritualism so abundantly conveyed in Greek philosophy without the sanction of fanaticism or superstition. The secular educationists had their Bible also, which they could propose as a substitue for the Evangelical Bible, on an appeal to the same ultimate principles of justice and of truth.

From its beginning the utilitarian school had been profoundly rationalistic, and indeed was the chief underground channel by which the rationalism of the eighteenth century flowed into the nineteenth. Bentham himself was an atheist, and that not merely in a cold speculative way, but with a feeling of hostility to theological belief not less passionate than that which animated a Condorcet or a Shelley. 'The spirit of dogmatic theology,' he writes, 'poisons everything it touches.'[1] What is called religion occupies a principal place among the causes of most human evils.[2] In England the clergy are stinging scorpions. On the Continent they are devouring dragons.[3] And there was to be no compromise with the evil thing. Simple theism without Christianity would still be a curse. In collaboration with George Grote, who was also an atheist, Bentham published a little book in which an attempt is made to show that Natural Religion is totally useless, and even mischievous, to society. James Mill did not go quite so far. He was not, like his friends, a dogmatic atheist, but what is now called an agnostic, holding that nothing can be known about the cause of the world—except, indeed, that it cannot be the work of a good and intelligent Being.

[1] Halévy, 'Le Radicalisme Philosophique,' Vol. I., p. 313. (The words are quoted in the original English.)

[2] Bentham's 'Works,' Vol. X., p. 81 (1822).

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 74 (1774–5).

For the rest, his reasons for rejecting the current religion were moral rather than metaphysical; that is, he could not reconcile it with utilitarian principles. Instead of the greatest happiness of all sensitive beings, it sets up as the standard of action the arbitrary commands of a thoroughly hateful Being—for as such he regarded a God who could call the human race into existence for the purpose of consigning the vast majority of its members to everlasting torment. It may be suggested that this was a purely accidental interpretation of Christianity, the sort of view that would naturally present itself to one who was bred a Calvinist and destined for the Presbyterian ministry. But there is no reason for supposing that his opinions would have been altered had he made its acquaintance in any of the more orthodox, or what are called Catholic, versions of the faith. For the dogma of human freewill, by which it is sought to relieve God from the responsibility for those endless sufferings which are the alleged destiny of evil-doers, was excluded by his determinist philosophy. And, even on the hypothesis of freewill, the infliction of any suffering merely as a retribution for sin would be condemned by the utilitarian ethics.

Mill was one of those whom Butler's 'Analogy' has the doubtful glory of having made complete unbelievers. It convinced him that the same arguments which have been used to destroy Christianity may be turned with equal effect against any system involving the creation of the world, as we know it, by an omnipotent and all-beneficent intelligence. This is, of course, assuming pain of any kind to be the one absolute evil, and an evil whose existence might be prevented by an exercise of absolute power. On any other theory of values the whole position of such unbelief as Mill's would have to be reconsidered.

There were, however, other than ethical objections, appealing with equal force to other minds. If Benthamism as a moral system implicitly condemned the current theology, as a logical method it was no less incompatible with the demands of faith. Neither the founder of the school nor his first followers would accept any proposition on authority, whether the seat of authority were placed in tradition or in the alleged utterance of an inward oracle. Appeals to ancient usage, to common sense, or to conscience, then generally known as the moral sense,

went for nothing in an argument with Bentham. Matters of fact had to be proved by such evidence as would be accepted in a law-court; and matters of opinion were judged by reference to logical standards no less strict than those of the mathematical sciences. As a rule, those who joined the school had already parted with all religious belief; but if they brought any with them, it was not likely to survive in such a rationalistic atmosphere as that which they were bound henceforth to breathe.

It was, however, only in private and among themselves that the Benthamites made known their hostility to all religion. Their position in reference to the popular creed differed widely from that of their French predecessors. To begin with, they may have thought that from a critical point of view the question was exhausted, that the arguments of the English deists, of Hume, and of the Encyclopaedists, were conclusive, and could not be improved. Then, again, their primary object was not the investigation of truth but the reform of society; and whatever might be the abuses of the Establishment, there was no comparison between them and the enormous evils for which the Roman Catholic Church in France had been held responsible; besides which revolutionary methods had been thoroughly discredited by the whole recent course of French history. But the strongest motive of all for strict reticence was, no doubt, the fear of offending public opinion. As has been already shown, a vast religious reaction had been in progress ever since the middle of the eighteenth century, and under the form of Evangelicalism had struck deep root both within and without the Establishment. The middle classes, rapidly rising into power and influence, were bringing their own narrow view of religion along with them. Dissent had become the ally of Liberalism, and Dissenters were even more bigoted than Churchmen. In such circumstances it seemed most politic to adopt the reticence of the Whigs without their hypocrisy; neither to attack nor to affect religion, but to ignore it.

The religious world felt and resented this eloquent silence. Utilitarianism was denounced as a godless philosophy; and godless in truth it was. An irreconcilable opposition of principles separated the utilitarian from the Evangelical point of view. When Bentham set up the happiness of all sensitive

beings as the sole end of human action, the sole standard of reference in disputed questions of right and wrong, he was bringing no new principle to light; he was but repeating in more sonorous tones the watchword of his whole century, the cry of the pulpit no less than the cry of the philosophical press. But this, as we saw, was the very method against which Wilberforce had protested as an apostasy from Gospel truth, a substitution of Paganism for Christianity. It might well be, as Paley said, that God willed the happiness of his creatures—if so, it was very good and kind of him to will it, and our guilt the greater for neglecting the service of such an amiable and excellent master—but for aught we knew, he might just as well in his inscrutable wisdom have willed the contrary; and indeed the future fate of the wicked showed clearly enough that between their happiness and his own glory there never had been a moment's hesitation. And while the religious motive was being asserted with fresh energy and significance by this illustrious convert, so also the worldly motive won an altogether new meaning from its presentation in the writings of Bentham and his school. It was no longer, as with Hume or Paley, a philosophical justification of things as they were, but a revolutionary demand for the reconstruction of things as they ought to be. Like the new pietists, the new secularists had their awakening to a sense of intolerable misery pervading the whole world; but the sin whose presence they felt and deplored was social rather than individual, a disease and corruption of the body politic, not a fall of the single soul. Nor was there any call for supernatural interference to set the disjointed framework right. What interest had perverted, interest better instructed might retrieve.

This appeal to enlightened self-interest as an instrument of social renovation brought much odium on the party; and undoubtedly in their analysis of human nature they over-estimated the importance of its selfish instincts in a way which laid their whole philosophy open to some just criticism, and much more stupid or wilful misconstruction. A new writer of transcendent genius who, discarding all theology, still retained much of the current theological animosity against Bentham, summed up Benthamism in the satirical formula: 'given a world of knaves, to evolve honesty out of their united action.'

But Plato, whose idealism was not less ardent than Carlyle's, has expressed himself like Bentham on the omnipotence of pleasure and pain as motives of action; while theologians of all shades have not been behindhand in addressing themselves to the selfish hopes and fears of mankind. In practice the utilitarians were as disinterested as their opponents; in theory they were not more mistaken.

'Philosophy,' says Schopenhauer, 'lets the gods alone, and asks in turn to be let alone by them.' Unfortunately that is what the gods will never agree to do, neglect being as fatal to their pretensions as hostility. In this instance the irrepressible conflict broke out on the educational question. I have already pointed out what a hopeful and progressive spirit prevailed in England during the early years of the nineteenth century all through the second great French war. One of the fashionable enthusiasms was elementary education. Even the old king expressed a wish, in his epigrammatic style, that the poorest of his subjects should be able to read the Bible, and have a Bible to read. The difficulty was to supply teachers enough for so enormous a demand. It was met by proposing to set the more advanced pupils to teach the less advanced what they had just learned. Both parties were expected to gain by this process; so much so, indeed, that James Mill, himself an educational expert, made it a part of the model system on which his eldest son was brought up, much to the disgust, as would seem, of the future philosopher.

The method of mutual instruction was first publicly advocated in England by Andrew Bell, a late Indian army chaplain, who had tried it with success in the orphan asylum at Madras, whence it subsequently became known as the Madras method. Bell's first pamphlet on the subject, published in 1797, fell into the hands of Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker schoolmaster, who had independently hit on the same device for supplying the want of trained teachers, and had thus been able to impart the rudiments of knowledge to great numbers of poor children. A friendly exchange of views between the two pioneers led to a much more extensive propaganda in favour of their joint scheme, in which Lancaster played the principal part. But if they agreed about the manner of teaching, they

differed about the matter. Both gave a foremost place to religious training; but while Bell, as a Churchman, took the Church catechism for his manual, and wished to keep education under clerical control, Lancaster advocated an unsectarian system, based on the reading of Scripture. Public opinion became interested in the quarrel, and the whole nation split into two hostile parties, the Tories siding with Bell and the Whigs with Lancaster. Southey and Coleridge spoke with particular violence on the sectarian side; the latter going so far as to substitute a most irrelevant defence of flogging, to which Lancaster objected, for a promised lecture on one of Shakespeare's plays.[1] In the face of such feuds state-action was impossible. A scheme for providing parish schools at the public expense was indeed proposed by Whitbread in 1807, and carried through the Commons, but was thrown out by the Lords, much to the satisfaction of some who had voted for it in the other House. Whatever was done for popular education was due to two private associations, the one representing Bell's and the other Lancaster's point of view.

At this juncture Bentham intervened with a rather naïve proposal to solve the sectarian difficulty by eliminating theology altogether from the curriculum of instruction. With this design he planned an elaborate system of his own, described in a work called 'Chrestomathia'; and invited subscriptions towards starting an institution where it was to be put into practice; offering for his part the beautiful garden of Ford Abbey as a site for the proposed school-house. The clergy, naturally enough, felt alarmed, and brought their influence to bear on the rich patrons who had originally encouraged Bentham by promises of support, with the result of compelling him to abandon the scheme.

Whether from annoyance at this obstruction on the part of a body whom he had always hated, or as a subsidiary part of the secularising scheme itself, does not appear; but at any rate, in connexion with his educational speculations, Bentham began that series of attacks on religious belief which give him a place, though not an important place, in the history of English rationalism.

The first of these is a bulky pamphlet entitled 'Church-of-

[1] Coleridge's 'Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton,' p. 22 (Bohn's ed.).

Englandism and its Catechism Examined.' As a piece of abstract criticism it is an acute and powerful exposure of the Church's dogmatic teaching; and had the Catechism been then proposed for the first time as a manual for the instruction of young children, it would probably not have survived the assault. But by no principle of philosophy—not even by Coleridge's Reason—is such abstract criticism more irrevocably condemned than by utilitarianism itself, rightly understood. For, accepting the greatest happiness as our standard, the question must surely be not what is ideally true or right, but what, at a given moment, in a given state of society, is possible and expedient. The catechism was not then being first drafted; it had held the field for some centuries, and was accepted by millions as an almost infallible manual of what children should be taught to believe and to do. It might not be so good as the 'Chrestomathia'—although the most thorough-going rationalist might have his doubts on that score—but when the question practically lay between the catechism and complete ignorance, the choice for a rationalist ought not to have been doubtful.

Bentham talks, indeed, as if the Church system of religious training was altogether mischievous and demoralising; but here he falls into the fallacy, common among powerful reasoners, of proving too much. It seems absurd to suppose that so many generations of English children could have been nourished on such poison as the catechism is here made out to be without exhibiting more distinct traces of its deadly activity in their after lives. Granting that many or even most of the author's countrymen were fools and knaves, still they were not quite so bad as the incriminated document ought to have made them; and, had they been so, his expostulations would have been utterly thrown away on such a race of miscreants.

So confident, however, is the recluse of Ford Abbey in the supremacy of logic over the popular will, and in the ability of the popular will to enforce its decrees, that he concludes by declaring that the time has arrived for the euthanasia of the Church of England, that is to say for its disestablishment and disendowment, with due provision for the compensation of those who have vested interests in its offices.[1]

[1] 'Church-of-Englandism,' pp. 193 *sqq*. Bentham, by the way, betrays

In his attack on the catechism Bentham professed to uphold the cause of real Christianity against a Church which taught and practised the opposite of what its Founder had instituted. From some incidental criticisms, and from the general tone of the whole pamphlet, it might easily be gathered that his own rejection of supernatural religion was complete. Still, the bulk of his reasonings might have been adopted without impropriety by an orthodox Dissenter. In his next polemic he goes a step further. Under the title 'Not Paul but Jesus' he attempts to discredit the personal character, and with the character the doctrine of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who was also the favourite Apostle of the Evangelicals. It is not, what the title might have led us to expect, a comparative view of the two entirely different religions respectively embodied in the Epistle to the Romans and in the Sermon on the Mount, but rather a historical investigation of the true relation subsisting between Paul and the original disciples of Jesus. The result is to exhibit the converted persecutor of the Church as an ambitious and worldly-minded intriguer, who joined the infant community in order to use its resources for the attainment of his own selfish ends. Even in Bentham's youth such an interpretation would have been entirely out of date. Appearing in 1822, it only becomes intelligible when read in the light of his personal circumstances, his absolute isolation from the intellectual currents of the age, his entire ignorance of history, and the low view of human nature generated by the habit of relying on motives of pecuniary interest. Paley's argument for the veracity of the early Christians, narrow and unhistorical as it now seems, stands on an altogether higher plane as compared with this grotesque transformation of the supremely self-devoted evangelist into the likeness of a Hervey, a Talleyrand, or a Watson.

As a Biblical critic Bentham's scholarship would have disgraced one of Lancaster's pupil-teachers. St. Luke is mentioned as one of the twelve Apostles.[1] Aquila and Priscilla are 'two female disciples of Paul.'[2] Naturally the

some of his old aristocratic spirit in the hearty approval he expresses for the servile definition given in the Catechism of 'My duty to my neighbour.'

[1] 'Not Paul but Jesus,' p. 342.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 370, note.

higher criticism is unsuspected. 'Of Paul's epistles the genuineness is out of dispute.'[1] Yet even in this unaccustomed field his wonderful sagacity shows itself. For not only has the antithesis between Paul and the Jerusalem Church, of which so much is made, turned out a valuable clue to the solution of problems involved in the early history of Christianity, but in one instance he has even detected the artificial parallelism between the legends of Peter and Paul,[2] which it is one of the most unquestionable merits of the Tübingen School to have worked out in detail.

If Bentham, like the contemporaries of his youth, made the mistake of accounting for what is called revealed religion by the impostures of interested politicians, he at least kept free from their glorification of nature, and had no more respect for Natural Religion than for Natural Rights. In fact, he refused to admit any distinction between natural and revealed religion, the one being no more than a particular development and elaboration of the other; while the simplest form of supernatural belief that could be called a religion contains in germ all the mischievous delusions commonly attributed to its extreme corruption and debasement. To get rid of these evils once for all, it was therefore necessary to cut religious belief out by the roots, to show that every baneful superstition necessarily follows from the primary assumptions of God and immortality.

Such is the object of a work entitled 'The Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind,' written by Bentham in collaboration with George Grote, the future historian of Greece. It appeared in 1822, under the pseudonym of 'Philip Beauchamp,' and was never publicly acknowledged by either of the joint authors. Considered as a contribution to rationalism, the book has for us a merely subsidiary interest, its destructive criticism being applied, not to the truth, but to the utility of religious belief, and within that limit having apparently exercised little influence on public opinion. We may take it, as a set-off against the ophelistic argument for religion, the principle that what is indispensable to morality must be assumed as true. What does unmixed harm, or more harm than good, must of

[1] Table at end of volume.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 56.

course, on the same principle, be rejected as false. And it may well have seemed that, after Hume's 'Dialogues,' no other argument for theism than the ophelistic one remained. But the method adopted is hardly suited to an age of observation and experiment. The reasoning is almost entirely deductive, and, like Bentham's attack on the catechism, has the fault of proving too much. To conceive an omnipotent ruler of the universe dispensing rewards and punishments to mankind through eternity is, we are told, to conceive an irresponsible despot having no end in view but his own glory, intent only on securing expressions of adoration and servility, accompanied by acts of abstinence from pleasure and submission to pain.[1] And this conception leads to the formation of a class set apart for the service of the divine sovereign, a class whose influence is thrown against the intellectual progress of society, and to whose interests its interests are sacrificed.

In his description of this persecuting and predatory class Bentham evidently had the Roman Catholic priesthood in view;[2] and there is a certain grim irony about the way in which the attacks of eighteenth-century deism on that belated enemy are turned against the purified residuum of faith which it had appointed to preside over the destinies of a regenerated society. And there is also a frank acceptance of the logical alternative presented to Protestants and Voltaireans by the reactionary philosophers of contemporary France, a Bonald, a Joseph de Maistre, and a Lamennais, between ultramontanism and atheism. Very well, then, atheism by all means, was the answer of the philosophical radicals.

It will be our business at a somewhat later stage of this narrative to enquire into the logical validity of the alleged alternative. Here what we have to do with is not logic but psychology, or, in more familiar language, human nature. Is it a fact that the average man feels called on to choose between Bentham and Bonald? Experience answers emphatically, No! The vast majority of human beings refuse to let themselves be imprisoned in such syllogisms, not only halting but taking up their permanent abode at one or other of the intermediate stations between the extreme positions fixed as alone tenable by theological or antitheological controversialists.

[1] 'Philip Beauchamp,' p. 33.

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 122 *sqq.*

If Bentham were right, there should be no religion but Roman Catholicism, or one still more effectually organised for the suppression of freedom and happiness. And this religion ought to be no help whatever to sound morality. But the second position seems not less opposed to experience than the first. His *a priori* reasoning leaves the traditional connexion between religion and morality quite unexplained. Certainly the good conduct of a people has not always varied directly as its faith. In many instances the ratio has been inverse. But, to justify 'Philip Beauchamp's' contention, this should always have been so, which does not seem to be the fact. That right opinions should be followed by right actions and wrong opinions by wrong actions was in truth a prejudice inherited from the theology which Bentham and Grote had discarded. Their philosophy of experience had not been pushed far enough. It had not developed into the historical method.

Meanwhile secular education, assuredly a thing very much needed, both then and ever since, became the watchword of the whole utilitarian school. Apart from the abstract reference to happiness as an end, on no other point did they remain so thoroughly agreed as on this. The attitude of Roebuck is a characteristic example of such fidelity. After deserting his old political associates on nearly every other great political issue in turn, after siding with the anti-Reformers, with Austria, with the Southern slaveholders, with the French Emperor, and with the Turk, he still held out against what is called religious education in elementary schools, and gave it as his opinion that children were much better employed in trying to describe 'all the four-footed things about a farm' than in learning about 'Joram and Jehoshaphat.' The University of London, which excludes all religious knowledge as a qualification for its ordinary degrees, was created by the utilitarians in order to carry out their secularist principles; and it was to save the chair of philosophy in University College, London, from the very suspicion of theistic teaching that George Grote, who had so far forgotten his youthful liberalism as to side with the South in the American War, threw his whole influence against the election of James Martineau in 1866. Finally, John Stuart Mill, who had learned in the schools of Coleridge and Comte to take a more favourable view of religion than any

other prominent member of the party, declared that state-supported education should be limited to imparting the facts of positive science.

Bentham's contributions to religious controversy seem to have attracted little attention at the time of their publication; they were not included among his collected works; and a candid friend pronounced them to be 'of exceedingly small value.' More than fifty years elapsed before the views of another utilitarian on religion were given to the world. As advocates of practical reforms the school found it expedient not to provoke more hostility than was absolutely unavoidable. Even criticism of the Church of England was found to damage the circulation of their official organ, the 'London Review'; and it is reported never to have recovered the ground lost by incurring the suspicion of an irreligious tendency.[1]

Deliverance from superstition was destined to come, not from the open assailants, but from the professed friends and champions of the conservative cause. Something has been said already about the extraordinary complexity of English life and thought, and the curious system of oscillation, compromise, and conciliation for which it is responsible. As often as not parties borrow their leaders, and sometimes they borrow their followers from the opposite camp. Already in 1820 James Mill wrote: 'I would undertake to make Mr. Canning a convert to the principles of good government sooner than your Lord Grey and your Sir James Mackintosh';[2] and Bentham, a far inferior judge of men, fixed his hopes on Robert Peel as the coming utilitarian statesman in preference to any of his own flatterers and professed adherents, such as Brougham and O'Connell. Thus also it came about that in the dark days after Waterloo the imaginative writer who most efficaciously, if not most consciously, carried on the work of Wordsworth before his fall and of Maria Edgeworth through her life, upholding the cause of calm reason against spurious enthusiasm, senseless passion, besotted bigotry, and blinded ignorance of every description, was neither Byron nor Shelley, neither Moore nor Leigh Hunt, but Sir Walter Scott, the Tory partisan

[1] 'Life of James Mill,' p. 389.

[2] Macvey Napier's 'Correspondence,' p. 24.

the fervent loyalist, the acknowledged chief of the romantic movement in Britain. But before proceeding to exhibit those characteristics of the Waverley novels with which we are alone concerned in this connexion, it seems desirable to give some account of what was really implied by that great literary tendency which I have just named, and of which Scott's novels are generally supposed to be the most enduring result.

In a former chapter I took occasion to point out how Romanticism, in reality if not in name, was already alive, active, and patent at a time usually associated with the utmost sobriety of classical taste, that is to say, during the reign of Queen Anne; and how it was denounced as an enemy of progressive civilisation by the most popular rationalist, who was also the most accomplished Hellenist of his age. What Shaftesbury protested against was, as will be remembered, the fashionable craze for remote, extraordinary, and unaccountable things, for what either lay outside the usual course of nature, or transcended nature altogether. Now, what we mean by romanticism in literature is precisely the selection of such themes for artistic treatment. Its purposes are effected either by transporting the reader to times and places where the known conditions of our life do not apply, or by placing the objects and incidents of common experience in such an unaccustomed light that their whole significance and value are transformed into something undreamed of before. In either case the laws of nature as we know them seem to be suspended, and reason is purposely made appear incompetent to deal with the new experiences presented to the senses or to the imagination. Miracles, in short, may and do happen; while events made inaccessible to human observation by the ordinary conditions of space and time are brought within the range of vision by some inexplicable revelation. Nor is it only in acknowledged works of fiction that such phenomena are presented for our admiration. Records of supernatural intervention in past ages are sought out, republished, and recommended to belief; while expectations are confidently held out that similar displays of divine power will be repeated either immediately or in a not distant future.

Like other irrational movements, romanticism carries in itself the seeds of its own dissolution. When, in an enlightened

age, attention is drawn to remote and exceptional phenomena, the necessary consequence is that they are studied more closely and better understood. Alleged supernatural events are brought under the laws of natural causation, or it is shown that they never really happened; and it is also shown how, in the latter case, they came to be believed. Creations of a past age, such as Gothic architecture, or the feudal system, or the institution of chivalry, once regarded with unreasoning contempt, and then with unreasoning wonder, are not only studied but imitated; and the very failure to reproduce their real or imaginary excellences robs them of their fancied ideality, and shows how, having arisen in obedience to the requirements of a particular period, they have fallen out of correspondence with an altered environment. Even romantic fiction helps to exorcise the spirit of romanticism by helping the imagination to realise it as an anachronism—an office done supremely well by Cervantes in the greatest of all novels, and in a less degree by imitators of less genius since his time.

English mediaevalism under Elizabeth found an ineffectual Ariosto in Edmund Spenser. Its second revival under George III. found not only a parodist in Horace Walpole, but a real Don Quixote in the second Earl of Egmont. That eccentric genius 'presented a memorial to the king for the grant of the island of St. John, where he proposed to revive the system of feudal tenures;' and 'seems to have persuaded the council to suffer him to make the experiment.' Fortunately, 'the folly of the proposal was subsequently exposed by Conway, and Egmont was obliged to relinquish his cherished scheme.'[1] He retained, however, the right of dealing with his own property on romantic principles; and so we find him rebuilding his house at Enmere in Somerset in the guise of a feudal castle and preparing it 'to defend itself with cross-bows and arrows against the time' when 'the fabric and use of gunpowder shall be forgotten.'[2]

When, a few years later, the romantic movement first broke out in Germany and secured for a time the services of her greatest literary genius, the architecture of Strassburg Cathedral had a good deal to do with his temporary enthusiasm for the life that he

[1] 'Dictionary of National Biography,' Vol. XLIV., p. 371.
[2] Walpole's 'Memoirs of George III.,' Vol. I., p. 308.

supposed it to express. But it was not on the side of their cast-iron feudal organisation that the Middle Ages appealed to the imagination of Goethe and his young friends. What fascinated them was rather the strongly marked individualism supposed to have been favoured by mediaeval conditions, harmonising admirably with Rousseau's return to nature, and with an imperfect apprehension of the Greek classical ideal. And so Goethe took for his first hero a free-lance of the sixteenth century who flourished when feudalism was in complete decay and dissolution. Not until a generation later, during the second German romantic movement, was attention drawn to the spiritual unity of mediaeval Europe, and a longing expressed for its revival in opposition to the anarchy of the modern revolutionary epoch.[1]

Walter Scott was in some ways the literary disciple of Goethe; and, like Goethe, he took hold of the romantic movement on its individualistic and adventurous side. A true child of the eighteenth century, what appealed to him was, not the law, but the lawlessness of the Middle Ages, or rather of all ages, beginning with the exploits, celebrated in Border minstrelsy, of the ferocious brigands known as moss-troopers; among whom he was proud to find his own ancestors making a figure. Border warfare had at least the merit or the excuse of being waged against the hereditary enemies of Scotland; but his admiration was subsequently extended to the still more lawless and predatory Highlanders, who were the enemies of their own countrymen, and finally to pirates, who were the enemies of all mankind.

For the Middle Ages, properly so called, what are sometimes distinguished as the Ages of Faith, Scott never shows any particular enthusiasm. Of the novels written before the obscuration of his genius only three, the 'Betrothed,' the 'Talisman,' and 'Ivanhoe,' fall within that period. Three others, the 'Fair Maid of Perth,' 'Anne of Geierstein,' and 'Quentin Durward,' belong to pre-Reformation times. The sixteenth century is represented by three more, the 'Monastery,' the 'Abbot' and 'Kenilworth,' and the seventeenth century by five, the 'Fortunes of Nigel,' the 'Legend of Montrose,' 'Woodstock,' 'Peveril of the Peak,' and 'Old Mortality.' The remainder,

[1] This is especially the point of view taken by Novalis.

forming much the largest group and including his greatest masterpieces, occur during the eighteenth century and the dawn of the nineteenth. Such an enumeration speaks for itself. Evidently Scott had none of Carlyle's reverence for the past, nor any tendency to seek for his ideal of human society in one period more than in another. If he had a preference it was for the more civilised. He had an artist's dislike for convention and restraint, and he took his subjects from times and places in which these things interfered least with the free development of character and incident. Chivalry was an etiquette like any other, or possibly more burdensome than other etiquettes; introduced like another as an object of gentle bantering and irony, or for tragic effect, to exhibit more forcibly the passions that chafed under its restraint.

As a philosophical historian—for he really has some claim to that title—Scott shows himself the true successor of Hume and Robertson. Neither in 'Ivanhoe' nor in the 'Essay on Chivalry' is there any attempt to exhibit the Middle Ages in a roseate light. They appear as what they really were, a period of hypocrisy, licentiousness, greed, oppression, and cruelty. We are interested in them, we wish to know more about them; but the idea of remodelling modern society in their likeness is the last that would occur to any sane reader who was out of, or had even entered, his teens.

If possible, Scott is even less an apostle of ecclesiastical than of political reaction. Within the limitations of a thorough man of the world he was, so far as we can make out, sincerely religious, sympathising in his large-hearted, broadly intelligent way with all forms of devout self-surrender to the unseen, Puritan or Anglican, Catholic or Protestant, Christian, Jewish, or Moslem. But assuredly he had no love for the Roman Catholic Church[1] in particular, nor the faintest notion that the Reformation was other than an unmixed blessing for Great Britain. As an artist he is even censurable for giving religious interests so small a place in his mediaeval romances. And his preferences are clearly not for the Christians, but, in the true eighteenth-century style, for the Mohammedans and the Jews. The most attractive figure in the 'Talisman,' just as in Lessing's 'Nathan,' is Saladin; the true heroine, and indeed the only

[1] In the 'Betrothed' all his sympathies are with the legislation of Henry II.

heroic figure in 'Ivanhoe' is Rebecca. Rowena exhibits in germ the traits afterwards worked out by Thackeray in his unrivalled burlesque. When asked for pardon by De Bracey, her answer is, 'I forgive you as a Christian;' which, as Wamba observes, means that she does not forgive him at all. In 'Quentin Durward' the Bohemian and declared atheist, Hayreddin, although dismissed from the scene with a proper display of pious horror, evidently enjoys much of the author's sympathy, as he certainly does of the reader's.

Religious ministers of all denominations are the object of Scott's unsparing ridicule and contempt; the dissociation of professed piety from genuine morality being, in their instance, most characteristically exhibited. A typical case is that of the Lollard minister in the 'Fair Maid of Perth,' who wishes Catherine to become the Duke of Rothsay's mistress in order that his co-religionists may have a powerful friend at court.[1] And there is something of the same spirit in the sufficiently intelligible hint that David Deans was hoping to the last that his elder daughter would commit perjury in order to save her sister from the gallows. Jeanie's own incorruptible truthfulness is indeed ascribed to her religious education. But why, then, had not the same education produced the same effect on David Deans, and, one may add, on religious professors generally?

Supernaturalism finds no more favour with the great novelist than ecclesiasticism or pietism. It figures, of course, largely in his romances as an element of interest, and especially as local colour in his Highland scenes; but, with a single exception, the apparitions and prophecies introduced for this purpose are explained by natural causes as the result of unaided human prescience, or as the product of a heated imagination. The single exception is the 'White Lady of Avenel,' who is certainly permitted to retain her spiritual character at the expense of descending to the prosaic character of a Sunday-school teacher.

In reference to the two great schools of art about which so much was written at this period and afterwards, Scott may best

[1] Such at least is the interpretation I put on the advice given by Father Clement in chapter xiii. of the 'Fair Maid.' But I admit that it is open to a less unpleasant construction.

be described as one who worked up romantic materials into classic forms, and who used romantic motives for classical ends, for the development of purely humanist and naturalist ideas. Although no Hellenist in scholarship, he has the insatiable curiosity of a Greek, the Greek reverence for law, understood as measure and restraint. His poetry has been compared to Homer's, and with justice, although his border-blood carried in it a fiercer battle-joy than any confessed by a soul

> 'Whose master-bias leans
> To home-felt pleasures and to gentle scenes.'

But the resemblance lies most, where it has been least observed, in their common devotion to the ideals of patriotism and fame, proclaiming in clarion tones to a sensual world that an hour of glorious life is worth an undistinguished age; in their common contempt for the shrinking cowardice which dreads as the greatest of evils the abridgment of its unrecorded days; in their common conviction that no life is worth any great effort to keep it. But indeed Scott's outlook on existence is summed up in words even more sweeping as a condemnation of its value than those which on a like occasion the son of Thetis said. Achilles consoles Lycaon for death by reminding him of the far nobler and better ones, himself among the number, who are sentenced to the same doom. Helen Macgregor, Rob Roy's wife, tells *her* victim with a sublimer contempt and a still more terrible irony that she 'would have bid him live if life had been to him the same weary and wasting burden that it is to her, that it is to every noble and generous mind.'

Standing at the opposite pole of politics and popularity, Sir Walter Scott agrees with his stern countryman and contemporary, James Mill, that life is a poor thing at the best—adding that it is poorest for the best.

Such sentiments are widely removed from Evangelicalism, and even from any sincere form of Christianity; and we are now in a position to understand how George Eliot, 'when asked in later life what influence had unsettled her orthodoxy,' could reply, 'Walter Scott's.'[1] And we can also see with how little relevancy Newman could quote the great poet in the North

[1] Leslie Stephen's 'George Eliot,' p. 27.

as 'contributing by his work in prose and verse to prepare men for some closer, more practical approximation to Catholic truth.'[1]

Among Scott's poetical contemporaries there is only one whose subjects and methods can be brought into line with his religious and political opinions. Southey, belonging in all ways to the romantic school, very soon crossed over from the revolutionary and freethinking to the Tory and High Church side. Wordsworth, who eventually took up the same position, produced all his best work during the pantheistic and radical period of his career; but at no time can he be identified with either the classical or the romantic tendency. Coleridge, a romanticist, and latterly a Tory, was, as we have seen, a liberal in theology; and even more a liberal than he could afford to acknowledge openly. Moore, whose theological opinions counted for nothing, combined romantic literature with Whig politics. In Byron classic and romantic elements were so blended as to form an amalgam in which their respective shares are hard to distinguish. Shelley combines with a purely rational intellect and convictions to match a taste so comprehensive as to rise above all critical distinctions, and to admit with equal facility the claims of beauty under every possible presentation. In his poetry coldly abstract conceptions and bloodless allegories, more akin to the spirit of the later eighteenth century than to the spirit of the nineteenth, are set forth with a glittering fancy and a musical enthusiasm which wins forgiveness for their hollowness and frigidity. Here we have a spurious classical content treated with genuinely romantic inspiration. In the creations of Keats alone are the two tendencies combined with the most consummate art and the most magical effect. The 'Endymion' presents what one may call the new classicised romanticism on its more amorous, sentimental, and pastoral side; the 'Hyperion' on its more adventurous and elevated side, with a wealth of colossal figures moving amid reminiscences or promises of extraordinary events, and gleaming through illimitable perspectives of space and time; but all freed from every trace of Asiatic violence and Scandinavian indistinctness,

[1] Cardinal Newman's 'Essays,' Vol. I., p. 268.

outlined with the unmistakable clarity and sanity of Hellenic thought.

This convergence of the classic and romantic movements, so characteristic of the whole revolutionary period, brought about in politics the liberation of Greece. Napoleon's career of conquest and reorganisation proceeded in avowed imitation of Roman imperialism; the uprising of the peoples against him linked itself avowedly with mediaeval and Christian traditions; but the enthusiasm of Europe for Greece, and of the Greeks for liberty, reproduced in equal proportions the ideas of the Athenian Demos and of the Templars, of Leonidas and of St. Louis, of Simonides and of Rudel. Still, the whole gain was for the modern spirit, for the Liberal cause all the world over, first in politics, and then through politics in philosophy, for the predominance of reason over authority and tradition.[1]

Apart from all these general tendencies, not easy to circumscribe or analyse, a more direct and immediate victory over traditional credulity was won by the application of romantic studies to classic literature and history, beginning with the enquiries of Wolf and Niebuhr into the composition of the Homeric poems and the sources of early Roman history. It was no new thing to deny the single-handed authorship of the 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey,' still less to cast doubt on the stories related by Livy and Dionysius. Already in 1730 the great Italian philosopher Vico had convinced himself that the Homeric epics were the product of no one poetical genius but of a whole people, using what we call poetical phrases as their natural language. Already in 1738 Beaufort, a free-thinking French exile, had shown by a searching examination of the sources that the history of Rome before the burning of the city by the Gauls has no sure documentary foundation, and that, apart from a few general facts, it remains quite uncertain. But Vico's great work found no readers outside Italy—one might almost say outside Naples—for a century; and Beaufort, whatever effect he may have had on scholars, exercised no appreciable influence on the public opinion of his own or after times. The theories of Wolf and Niebuhr, on the other hand,

[1] This is well brought out by George Brandes in his great work on the chief currents of modern European thought.

were at once taken up by their contemporaries, eagerly canvassed, accepted by many, and made the basis of researches which have continued down to the present day. We have to ask for an explanation of this remarkable phenomenon.

It seems to me that the success of the two German scholars was due, not merely to their vast learning, but also, and even more, to their connexion with the romantic movement of the age. For of that movement interest in ballad poetry had all along been a prime factor. It began, one may say, with Addison's account of the ballad of Chevy Chase in the 'Spectator.' It received a powerful impetus from the publication of Percy's 'Reliques of Ancient English Poetry.' And it culminated in the modern ballads of Goethe, Bürger, and Schiller in Germany, Scott, Coleridge, and Southey in Britain, Victor Hugo and Alfred de Musset in France, together with the many spirited translations of old ballads into the chief languages of modern Europe. Thus when Wolf said that the Homeric epics were really collections of short lays which had long circulated from mouth to mouth without the help of writing, and were first reduced to order under Peisistratus; or when Niebuhr said that the heroic tales preserved in Livy were simply prose versions of similar lays originally recited before the popular audiences, or by the firesides of old Rome, their surmises fell in with an order of ideas familiar to the whole reading public of the early nineteenth century.

Of the two, Wolf, who had really opened a much more fertile field of speculation, had much less success than his younger contemporary, the Roman historian. His theory, as originally proposed, was met by the insuperable difficulty, that the 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey,' as we have them, are no fortuitous concourse of independent lays, but artistic wholes composed of mutually related parts. This difficulty has since been removed by a different method of analysis, in full accordance with the doctrine of evolution, but at that time not dreamed of by any critic. The Homeric epics are now conceived as having been constructed by a process of gradual enlargement from a primitive nucleus, which may or may not be regarded as a ballad, which may or may not have been committed to writing by its first author, but the evidence for whose distinctness from later accretions has nothing to do with theories about ballad

poetry or about the time when writing was first generally practised in Greece. Such as it was, however, Wolf's view won the adhesion of Coleridge, who, indeed, declared that he had come to the same conclusions at the suggestion of Vico without having read a word of the 'Prolegomena'; and of Macaulay, who asserted in his confident way that the Homeric poems were beyond doubt generically ballads.

Wolf's argument that writing was not used for literary purposes until a comparatively late period by the Greeks, and that such long compositions as the Homeric epics could not have been constructed without its aid, was obviously applicable to other ancient books of a more sacred character; and the bold critic did not hesitate to apply it to the Hebrew Scriptures in particular. 'Among the Hebrews,' he tells us, 'the art of written composition is not a little more modern than is commonly supposed, and the authenticity of their books, particularly of their more ancient books, is therefore questionable. But this is a subject that I leave to Oriental scholars.'[1] The same thought may have suggested itself to some of his English followers, preparing the way for later developments of Biblical criticism, which, like Homeric criticism, has become quite independent of the doubtful considerations to which it first owed a favourable hearing.

Niebuhr's speculations, as I have said, won a wider acceptance, at least in England, than Wolf's. The theory of an extensive ballad literature, orally transmitted from generation to generation among the early Romans, and converted into prose history by their first annalists, suited our romanticist ideas to perfection, and was endorsed by such scholars as Bishop Thirlwall, Professor Malden, and Dr. Arnold. Above all, it was brilliantly expounded and imaginatively illustrated by the most plausible and self-confident reasoner of the age. Not only did Macaulay reproduce Niebuhr's arguments in a style differing as much from Niebuhr's as light from darkness, but he also performed the marvellous feat of turning back certain episodes of Roman history into something like what he supposed their original ballad-form to have been, with the result of making them much more familiar to the English people than ever were the events related in their own metrical chronicles.

[1] 'Prolegomena,' p. 95.

Among the millions who have learned Macaulay's Lays by heart, perhaps not as many thousands have read the prefaces explaining their purpose, or have perceived that they are conditioned by an absolute disbelief in the exploits narrated,—are even intended to justify such disbelief by showing how fiction can come to be mistaken for truth. Yet it is certain that Macaulay not only shared Niebuhr's scepticism, but went beyond it, when he described Livy's whole first decade as scarcely entitled to more credit than our Chronicle of British Kings who reigned before the Roman invasion. It seems paradoxical that romanticism, of all philosophies, should become a school of historical negation. But a moment's consideration will show how easy was the transition from one to the other. To be constantly studying old ballads, and constantly comparing them with authentic historical records, was the surest way to arrive at the conviction of their worthlessness as evidence of what had actually happened. To trace their influence on the old chroniclers was to discover how history had come to be corrupted at the fountain-head. To compose new ballads, or indeed romantic fiction of any kind, for the public taste of the time was to gain a clear understanding of the mechanism by which fable is presented under the garb of fact.

The ballad-theory of early Roman history left in Macaulay's mind 'not the slightest doubt of its truth.'[1] There has long been among scholars not the slightest doubt of its fallacy. In Germany it had never gained general acceptance, and had been attacked even by one of the great romantic critics, A. W. Schlegel; eleven years after the publication of Macaulay's Lays, the arguments against it were summed up with overwhelming force by Schwegler; and two years later it was finally disposed of, together with some more of Niebuhr's delusions, in Cornewall Lewis's epoch-making 'Inquiry.' But the work of demolition carried on under its shelter had been accomplished, and the scaffolding might now be safely removed. Such is the constitution of public opinion that it will not accept negative criticism unless the negations are presented along with a certain amount of provisional reconstruction, which may or may not be lasting, but which, at any rate, has the priceless

[1] Macvey Napier's 'Correspondence,' p. 395.

advantage of giving the 'will to believe' something to grasp and lean on for support. Niebuhr did what Beaufort had failed to do—he ruined the authority of early Roman history, just because he put something in place of Livy's stories, and, above all, because he explained how those stories had come to be believed. The explanation, indeed, really explained nothing; for we know, without being told, that what is false must somehow, at some time, and by some one, have been invented; and however widely the responsibility may be distributed, we are ultimately confronted by the fact, made sufficiently familiar by daily experience, that some people tell stories, and that other people repeat them, without enquiring too curiously into their truth.

This disinclination on the part of public opinion to accept undiluted negation from its instructors is, curiously enough, accompanied and rectified by an instinctive faculty for seizing on the negative element, which is alone digested and assimilated, to the exclusion of the positive theories which served as a vehicle for its deglutition. Thus it came to pass that Niebuhr, the most arbitrary and dogmatic of mankind, the most respectful of received beliefs, and the most unwilling to shake the faith of the multitude, was fated to stand for the very type of historical scepticism, and to exercise what would have seemed to him a most pernicious influence in weakening the belief of educated Englishmen in the historical foundations of their religion. It had not escaped so great an intellect that his critical method was capable of being extended to Scripture history and literature. A fresh study of the Old Testament, undertaken during his residence in Rome, soon revealed the difference of authorship in one and the same Biblical book, the dates when each portion was composed, and 'the totally mistaken views prevailing with regard to the history of Hebrew literature.'[1] His researches were not continued, among other reasons, because they would give pain to some whom he did not wish to offend, and because, what was worse, they would please others of a very different stamp.

Still, a certain divergence from Genesis did betray itself in Niebuhr's Roman history, drawing down on the illustrious scholar what one of his English translators, the future Bishop

[1] 'Life,' Vol. II., p. 111 (English translation).

Thirlwall, called 'a stupid and bestial attack'[1] in the 'Quarterly Review.' In Germany most persons were at a loss to conceive on what grounds Niebuhr could be assailed in England as irreligious. But this was only because Biblical infallibility, and one may even say Biblical inspiration, had long ceased to be accepted as religious dogmas in Germany, while in England they were popularly held to be the indispensable basis of all religion. And we may reasonably suppose that the Quarterly Reviewer's wrath was due much more to the evident suggestiveness of Niebuhr's method than to any casual incursion of the Roman historian into the field of Biblical archaeology. A peep into his private correspondence would, as we know, have fully confirmed the alarm thus excited.

German influence, always a powerful factor in English religion, was not limited to the example of revolutionary methods applied to the criticism of Homer and Livy. It had acted on Coleridge by the direct communication of the results reached by liberal professors of theology in German universities. Very early in the century it had begun to act on the clergy through Bishop Marsh's translation of Michaelis, and through Marsh's own dissertation on the origin of the Synoptic Gospels annexed thereto.[2] And now the whole

[1] Thirlwall's 'Letters, Literary and Theological,' pp. 101–2. 'Bestial' is rather strong. What the Quarterly Reviewer said was that Niebuhr was the author of 'some of the most offensive paragraphs which have appeared since the Philosophical Dictionary;' and deserved to be called 'a pert, dull scoffer' ('Quarterly Review,' No. lxxvii., p. 9. 1829). Four years earlier a writer in the same Review had recommended 'any who are tempted to tax Niebuhr with deism or infidelity because he does not believe the descent of all mankind from two first parents,' to study a passage in Johnson's 'Life of Sir Thomas Browne,' where there is a caution against the disposition rashly 'to enlarge the catalogue of infidels' ('Quarterly Review,' No. lxiii., p. 86. 1825). The cause of this remarkable change of front will be given in the next chapter.

[2] Marsh supposes that the Gospels arose by a process of transcription and compilation from written sources, going back to communications made by the Apostles. And he reconciles this with the doctrine of inspiration by assuming that each Evangelist was supernaturally protected from error by the action of the Holy Spirit ('Dissertation on the Origin and Composition of the Three First (*sic*) Canonical Gospels.' Cambridge, 1801. Page 210). Randolph, Bishop of Oxford, justly regards this hypothesis as destructive of inspiration, and insists on treating all four Gospels as original sources in the strictest sense. He has even the hardihood to deny that St. Luke acknowledges his

subject was revived by a greater than Marsh. Before translating Niebuhr, Thirlwall had translated Schleiermacher's 'Introduction to the Gospel of St. Luke,' prefixing to it a long preface on the Synoptic problem, which, for the purely scientific spirit displayed in discussing questions of Biblical authority, could hardly be surpassed at the present day.

We have seen that Schleiermacher accepted the extreme results of rationalism in the sense of rejecting all supernatural belief, and only preserved religion by reducing it to a form of emotion. Such a view, of course, excludes the possibility of miracles; and under the treatment of one who, like this theologian, was largely influenced by romanticism, it explains them as parable or poetry. Thirlwall was not committed to any close agreement with the critic whom he translated; before accepting the See of St. David's he was able to assure Lord Melbourne of his own orthodoxy, nor have we any right to question his sincerity. As a layman, however—for the translation was published before his ordination—he agreed with Schleiermacher in holding that the books of the New Testament Canon are amenable to the same rules of historical criticism as any other historical compositions. More particularly the translator's own Preface, and the Essay which it introduces, go to prove that the Synoptic Gospels were compiled out of pre-existing documents.

Thirlwall admits that on any hypothesis such a view is 'irreconcilable with that doctrine of inspiration once universally prevalent in the Christian Church, according to which the sacred writers were merely passive organs or instruments of the Holy Spirit;' adding, however, that 'this doctrine has been so long abandoned that it would now be a waste of time to attack it.'[1] Only the learned, however, have abandoned it, for 'undoubtedly it is still a generally received notion.' Moreover, 'the inspiration of Scripture is a necessary and fundamental tenet on which the Church of England absolutely insists,' while allowing 'her members full liberty of private judgment as to the nature and mode of that inspiration.' Our critic, for his part, seems to think that the inspiration of the Evangelists left

indebtedness to earlier writers ('Remarks on Michaelis's Introduction to the New Testament.' London, 1802. Page 27).

[1] *Op. cit.*, Introduction, p. xi.

them just as dependent on the ordinary sources of information as any other writers, and just as liable to make mistakes about matters of fact.[1] He even seems to agree with Schleiermacher that the accounts of the Nativity in the first and third Gospels are irreconcilable, and that both contain fabulous elements.[2]

An inspiration burdened with such liabilities can have little, if any, authority or value for religious belief. Thirlwall himself takes refuge in the exceedingly vague statement that 'we must seek the operation of the Spirit not in any temporary, physical, or even intellectual changes wrought in its subjects, but in the continual presence and action of what is most vital and essential in Christianity itself.' Only the opinions of private judges are not likely to agree better about 'what is most vital and essential to Christianity,' than about the nature and mode of inspiration.

The future Bishop of St. David's does not seem to have suffered as regards popularity or preferment by his temporary connexion with German rationalism. Far different was the fate of his successor in the same field, Henry Hart Milman, whose 'History of the Jews' appeared in 1829, at the close of the year. This work immediately raised a storm of disapproval, and its author was 'denounced from University and other pulpits . . . as a most dangerous and pernicious writer.'[3] The scandal is popularly ascribed to his having called Abraham 'a Sheik.' As Dr. Newman objected to the phrase, we must suppose that it conveyed some mysterious suggestion of infidelity; although one fails to see how it involves a more fatal assimilation of sacred to profane history than is implied, for instance, in calling David a king. Still, had the book contained no more daring innovation, it would probably have been allowed to circulate quietly among the children of serious persons, with other volumes of the 'Family Library.' But in fact there was a great deal more. Dean Stanley is, no doubt, wildly mistaken when he describes Milman's little volumes as 'the first decisive inroad of German theology into England;'[4]

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. xv. [2] *Op. cit.*, Notes, pp. 315–17.
[3] 'Life of Milman,' pp. 85–6.
[4] 'Dictionary of National Biography,' *sub. nom.*

and another writer still more so, who talks of it as 'sifting and classifying documentary evidence and evading or minimising the miraculous.'[1] Marsh's and Thirlwall's translations of Michaelis and Schleiermacher appeared earlier, and certainly may be described by those who love sensational language as 'inroads of German theology;' and Coleridge's 'Church and State' may, without any great inaccuracy, be similarly qualified. But in his first edition, with which alone we are concerned, Milman makes no use whatever of German criticism, ignores documentary evidence, and relates the most astounding miracles as if they were well-attested historical occurrences. But there are some indications of incipient scepticism, which perhaps would not escape the notice of an intelligent child. The appearance of God in the burning bush is mentioned only as having been related by Moses on his return to Egypt, not as a real event; and the story of Balaam's ass is similarly treated.[2] The number of the Israelites who fled from Egypt is left uncertain, owing to the possibility of an error in the received text.[3] Joshua's command to the sun and moon to stand still is regarded as possibly a misunderstanding of an old ballad in which those luminaries are invited, by a bold image, to stop for the purpose of witnessing Jehovah's triumph over his enemies. And, what perhaps gave most offence to contemporary religionists, we are cautioned against supposing that the actions of Ehud and his successors in the Book of Judges were performed at the instigation or with the approval of the Almighty. The phrase that they were raised up by God merely means that they were animated by an ardent spirit of patriotism and piety.[4]

This was quite enough without any 'sifting of documentary evidence' or the like. When we consider with what violence the religious reaction was then raging in England, it becomes quite intelligible that such views of the Old Testament history

[1] 'Dictionary of National Biography,' *sub. nom.*

[2] Vol. I., p. 152.

[3] 'Some general error runs through the whole numbering of the Israelites in the desert' (p. 57). 'It is by no means easy to reconcile the enormous numbers contained in the census with the language of other passages in the Scriptures' (p. 140).

[4] P. 192, *note*. This passage and that relating to the census are omitted from a piratical reprint of Milman, issued by Murray, Sutherland, & Co., in 1876.

could not be allowed to circulate in families where the whole Bible was systematically presented as the work, not of man, but of God. Nor was this all. From the very nature of the case every heterodox expression in the mouth of a clergyman is liable to be taken, and is justly taken, at an estimate very much higher than its face-value. If he swerves ever so little to the right or left of the Anglican Via Media towards Rome on the one hand, or towards Berlin on the other, it is naturally assumed that he would go very much further but for the restrictions entailed by his profession. Naturally, also, the most inquisitorial scrutiny into the possible consequences to be expected from seemingly harmless aberrations is exercised on one another by members of opposite parties within the ministry itself. In the next decade Newman had cause to complain of the jealousy with which his movements were watched, and, as he thought, misinterpreted. But Newman himself had set the example by helping to swell the cry of alarm at every fresh symptom of liberalism in theology. When at Rome he met an appeal to Arnold's opinion on the Christian interpretation of a certain passage in Scripture by asking, 'but is *he* a Christian?'[1] and afterwards explained himself by referring to 'some free views of Arnold about the Old Testament.' And in just the same spirit he chose to consider Milman's 'History of Christianity' as the earnest of a possible great coming battle between Rationalism and Christianity.

Newman's imputation on Arnold's faith was of course wholly undeserved; the headmaster of Rugby being in his own way a not less fervent believer than the High Church leader himself. But the most extreme suspicions of Milman's orthodoxy seem to have been, after all, fully justified. His 'History of Latin Christianity' breathes throughout a spirit of contempt for dogmatic controversies scarcely, if at all, exceeded by Harnack's more outspoken expressions of opinion; so much so, indeed, that in the judgment of Fenton Hort, a sufficiently impartial judge, all theology, and even all truth, seemed to its author a chimera.[2] In the circumstances it was hardly to be expected that Milman should receive high ecclesiastical promotion. The wonder would rather be that he rose to be Dean

[1] 'Apologia,' p. 34.

[2] 'Life of Hort,' Vol. I., p. 394.

of St. Paul's, if deaneries had not become the consecrated preferment of eminent latitudinarian divines.

The name of Arnold has already occurred in connexion with the historical theories of Niebuhr, and with the romanticism to which Niebuhr half unconsciously gave a rationalistic direction. It will occur again in the next chapter in connexion with the great religious reaction in which he bore a distinguished part, while hastening its dissolution by the violence of his opposition to the more thorough-going section of its leaders. Here we have merely to specify those concessions of his to rationalism which Newman thought so dangerous that Arnold's elevation to the episcopal bench, had it actually occurred, as it seems to have been contemplated, would have hastened his own secession from the Anglican community. To Arnold himself these concessions did not seem to be of any importance, any more than did the similar views entertained by Niebuhr to the great historian himself. So far as I am aware, they found little or no expression in his published writings, and have only come to light through private letters and reports of conversations. John Henry Newman's younger brother, Francis, tells us that Dr. Arnold looked on the historical truth of the account of the Creation and the Fall in Genesis as a matter of indifference; Noah's deluge was evidently mythical, and the history of Joseph 'a beautiful poem.'[1] We learn from one of his letters that he disbelieved in the authenticity of Daniel,[2] for those times a very serious step, and one which cost Coleridge some struggles to make, or to avow. In New Testament criticism, Francis Newman is again our authority for Arnold's opinion that the great similarity of the Synoptic Gospels marks them as having flowed from very similar sources, and that the First Gospel has 'no pretensions to be regarded as the actual writing of Matthew.'[3] The Fourth Gospel, on the other hand, he regarded as evidently the work of an eye-witness, and as such, 'an impregnable fortress of Christianity.'[4]

Such views bear a close resemblance to those held at a much earlier period by Coleridge, whose 'Confessions of an

[1] F. W. Newman's 'Phases of Faith,' p. 68.
[2] Stanley's 'Life of Arnold,' Vol. II., p. 164.
[3] 'Phases,' p. 81.
[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 115.

Inquiring Spirit' were read by Arnold with interest and sympathy on their first publication,[1] and, like his, had their source in German teaching, whose effect, as we have seen, was reinforced by the parallel process of disintegration applied to Homeric poetry and Roman history by Wolf and Niebuhr—an influence fully appreciated by Arnold himself.[2] How far his pupils suspected these rationalistic leanings, or were affected by them, is not clear. But it is certain that the most distinguished among their number altogether abandoned belief in dogmatic theology. In this respect the attitude of his son Matthew is too notorious to need more than a reference, until we come to deal with it hereafter as a part of subsequent history. Arthur Stanley is known to have held the same opinions as Matthew Arnold,[3] while occupying the position of a great Anglican dignitary. Arthur Hugh Clough became in early life a complete sceptic. Richard Congreve founded a branch of the Positivist Church in London. But all four retained from their early training under Dr. Arnold not only a high moral enthusiasm, but also a passionate love for religion as such, which with them, as with others, has so complicated and disguised the course of English rationalism that before proceeding any further some account must be given of the movement whence it was derived.

[1] 'Life,' Vol. II., p. 111.
[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 338.
[3] The authority for this statement will be given hereafter.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RELIGIOUS REACTION AND ITS MEANING

WRITING to a German friend towards the close of 1831, Connop Thirlwall characterises the state of religious feeling in England by the bitter remark that 'any man who doubts the certainty of the Messiah's appearance on earth being now near at hand is denounced by, I am afraid I may say, a majority of the persons who claim the epithet religious by way of eminence as a downright infidel.[1] This excited state of public opinion explains the brutal attack on Niebuhr in the 'Quarterly Review,' and the outcry against Milman which led to the discontinuance of the series in which his 'History of the Jews' first appeared. But the millenarian fanaticism to which the illustrious Hellenist refers with such contempt was only one symptom among others of a far vaster religious movement, to whose spell he, with other intellects of equal distinction, had succumbed.

This movement, as has been shown in a former chapter, embraced all Western Europe, and was intimately connected with the rise of the uneducated masses into prominence, influence, and power. Since its beginning the democratic cause had suffered a temporary check by the defeat of its French representatives, and by the repressive system practised after Waterloo. But the spiritual form of democracy had lost nothing; it had even gained by the political reaction. For the royalist and aristocratic party were persuaded that the downfall of the old *régime* had been brought about exclusively by the spread of religious unbelief, and that no surer safeguard against the recurrence of such a catastrophe could be devised than the sedulous propagation of religious beliefs and practices among

[1] 'Letters, Literary and Theological,' pp. 101–2.

all classes, but more particularly among the most ignorant. In France before the Revolution high intellect among the titled classes had generally been associated with freethought; it now shared in the plebeian revolt against reason. The three original leaders of the Catholic revival, Bonald, Chateaubriand, and Joseph de Maistre, were all of noble birth; and their younger ally, Lamennais, had some claim to that distinction. On the Continent romanticism was peculiarly associated with Catholicism; and, although connected with reminiscences of feudalism, it was nourished on popular poetry and superstition. And everywhere among all classes the return of peace set free a mass of nervous energy which, in the absence of other sources of excitement, threw itself with avidity on the hopes and fears of a supernatural world.

In England the current gained an additional reinforcement from its confluence with the pietistic movement started three generations before by William Law, the Wesleys, and Whitfield. Although purely native in its commencements, that movement received its first decisive impulse and true organising power from the contagion of German pietism, carried across the sea by Moravian missionaries; just as the English Reformation, though claiming descent from Wyclif, would have perished but for the advent of Luther. By Wesley's time, however, the teaching of Spener and Franke had spent its force in the parent country, and was being succeeded by rationalism; while in England the normal course of development was inverted, the deistic movement being succeeded by Methodism without the Church and by Evangelicalism within it.

The Evangelicals had for a long time little claim to intellectual or social distinction; and in politics they generally found themselves on the reactionary side.[1] But the adhesion of Wilberforce opened the great world to their influence, and to some extent linked them with the cause of freedom by enlisting them in the attack on the slave-trade and slavery. Meanwhile their traditional connexion with Cambridge brought their theological studies into touch with the mathematical sciences. Finally, the suspicion of Methodism, which had long alienated from them the sympathies of the conservative as well as of the cultivated classes, gave way before the steady grasp of Church

[1] Cowper was a good Whig; but he is an exception.

principles, maintained through half a century's ministry by their leader, Charles Simeon.[1]

But the Evangelical party, strong as it grew in weight and numbers, did more by example than by doctrine. Evangelical influence was shown less by making converts to Calvinism than by exciting religious feeling, or at least a lively interest in religion, throughout the country. And the process of attraction worked with more energy because it fell in with the new trend of public opinion, due to the after effects of the great war; the longing for social reform, accompanied by a dread that reform without religion might take the shape of a devastating revolution; the sense of a supernatural presence in the wonderful events of which Europe had lately been the scene; the craving for a new source of excitement now that those events were ended.

Swelled by these currents, the tide of religious feeling rose until it submerged some of the loftiest intellectual summits. Henry Hallam, who flourished at this time, has, alone, I believe, among British lay historians, left a reputation for deep and genuine Christian piety. Sir Humphry Davy, always personally religious, now became a reactionary obscurantist;[2] Wordsworth, whatever his inner convictions may have been, professed himself a High Churchman.[3] Southey was a High Churchman by profession and conviction alike. As to the greatest of English intellects, Coleridge, I have endeavoured to show that in spite of some seeming disclaimers, he remained to the last a Germanised Alexandrian pantheist. But it is important to note that, like his contemporary, Schleiermacher, he combined this philosophical creed with a warm and even passionate religious feeling of the Evangelical type. Traces of the same influence may be detected in a quarter where they would least have been expected. High as was the peak on which Shelley stood, broad-based as were his speculative beliefs, some spray from those surging waters must have dashed across his feet, if it be true that once when expatiating on the good a

[1] Compare the character of Tryon in 'Janet's Repentance' ('Scenes of Clerical Life,' by George Eliot).

[2] So Coleridge told Crabb Robinson ('Diary,' Vol II., p. 273).

[3] *Op. cit.*, Vol. III., p. 210.

good clergyman might do, he confessed a strong inclination to enter the Church.[1]

What had flashed for a moment before the imagination of England's supreme idealist was put into practice by several among the most gifted of his younger contemporaries. Never since the Middle Ages has such an array of genius, talent, learning, and self-devotion enlisted itself in the service of the English Church as during the quarter century which followed the great war. Among those who entered her ministry from 1814 to 1839 I find—placing them in chronological order—the names of Blanco White, John Keble, Whately, Peacock the mathematician, Adam Sedgwick, Milman, Thomas Arnold, Baden Powell, Whewell, J. H. Newman, Julius Hare, Thirlwall, Hurrell Froude, Samuel Wilberforce, Charles Merivale, John Sterling, F. D. Maurice, W. G. Ward, Arthur Stanley, and R. W. Church. The list, it will be seen, represents abilities and accomplishments of every kind, poetical, literary, philosophical, scientific, historical, and oratorical. In some instances the possessors of these shining gifts were drawn away from other professions to the service of the Church, an attraction exemplified by the cases of Hare and Thirlwall in 1827 and 1828, Merivale, Maurice, and Sterling in 1833 and 1834, dates which seem to mark epochs of peculiar intensity in religious feeling.

It has also to be observed that in searching for an index to the energy of religious feeling we need not limit ourselves to the clergy of the establishment. James Martineau, originally destined for a lay career, experienced a vocation in 1822, and was ordained a Unitarian minister in 1828. The three great poets who made their *début* during the latter part of this period, Elizabeth Barrett, Alfred Tennyson, and Robert Browning, were all deeply religious writers; the greatest statesman who grew to manhood in those years, William Ewart Gladstone, is no less famous for his piety than for his oratory; and Lord Shaftesbury, afterwards the recognised leader of the Evangelical party, but now more famous as the author of our Factory Acts, entered Parliament in 1826.

All great religious movements are determined by two main

[1] Dowden's 'Life of Shelley,' Vol. I., p. 513. The story is told on Peacock's authority.

factors, which in practice unite in one current or converge to work out a single result. There is the tendency to return to a primitive state of fancied purity and simplicity of manners. And going hand in hand with this, there is the tendency to react against the worldliness, the indifference, the corruption of modern times, of the state which has succeeded to the lost felicity of mankind. We talk about the Protestant Reformation; but in reality all reformations are protests, in the sense of denouncing what exists, as a prelude to the return or restoration of what it has unlawfully superseded. With early Christianity the protest was against pharisaism and heathenism; the ideal was a return to the carelessness and innocence of Eden. Then, as the Church herself became secularised, one attempt after another was made, in the Thebais, at Cluny, or at Assisi, to reconstruct the lost conditions of Galilee and Jerusalem;—each practically a failure, each a far-shining example of idealism to future generations. For all these protests alike are animated by the illusion that a society can be built up and maintained without the strife and the sorrow, the doom of mingled motives and imperfect achievement, which make human life what it is and must be. That other and higher life may be projected into a supernatural world, only attainable through death, and then only by the initiated, who, as Pindar says, know the end of this life and its God-given beginning. But there are always some ardent and impatient spirits who will not submit to this delay, who would hurry on the coming Kingdom by their prayers, or strive by their deeds to realise it on earth. This realisation is accomplished or attempted in various ways, by cherishing the spiritual at the expense of the material life in themselves, using the various resources of asceticism, as prayer, meditation, fasting, celibacy, abstinence from worldly pleasures, mutual edification, and the like; by carrying the tidings of redemption over the whole earth; by practising thaumaturgy; or, finally, by organising a world-wide spiritual society, armed with power to make the supposed will of God prevail. And as the process repeats itself age after age it becomes facilitated by reference to periods of similar excitement in the past, whose proceedings are taken as a model, with at best some efforts to avoid their more glaring mistakes.

Pietism is such an attempt to take religion, as people say,

in earnest; to realise the irrealisable, the transcendental, under the forms of space, time, and causality; to supersede by dreamy abstractions what has proved its title to exist by having lasted for millions of years. And the law of pietistic movements is that at first their representatives construct a picture of the primitive conditions of faith; then pray for its supernatural restoration, or predict that event as certain to occur very soon; and finally, either by direct imitation of former developments, or by unconscious submission to the same natural forces that brought these about, organise themselves into religious communities, where the impulses of religious devotion are at once satisfied, regulated, and repressed. The new religionists may form such communities for themselves, in accordance with their peculiar needs; or they may possess themselves of the old edifice by persuasion or force; or they may return to the ancient fold after a more or less protracted absence, bringing with them, however, inconvenient habits of independence and innovation; or they may remain there from the first, gradually reshaping it into conformity with their novel or resuscitated ideals. But in every case the impulse, begun in solitude, leads to the construction of a social union.

England after the peace exhibited all the various phenomena accompanying the growth and manifestation of pietism within comparatively narrow limits of space and time; their natural energy being heightened by the violent antagonism between the various religious bodies, as well as between all of them collectively and the spirit of revolutionary rationalism embodied in Bentham's school, combined with the new German criticism which some of the clergy themselves, following Coleridge's example, were beginning to accept and apply.

Above all, the old hostility between Protestants and Catholics had broken out again with unexpected violence. The Roman Catholic Church had profited to the fullest extent by the religious reaction abroad,—acquiring, moreover, a new halo of sanctity from the sufferings borne by her ministers under the Terror, and by her supreme Pontiff under the Empire. In France the Restoration had placed power in the hands of Catholic bigots to whom all religious liberty was hateful. Catholic thinkers from Bonald to Lamennais directed their

attacks quite as much against the Protestants as against the freethinkers, holding, indeed, that there was no logical resting-place between the Tridentine decrees and atheism;[1]—or for that matter, any practical halfway house either, the Revolution having sprung by a historical necessity from the theses of Luther. And this restored Catholicism presented itself under the form, at all times most odious to English Protestants, of an absolute Papal monarchy, with the claim, now put forward by Joseph de Maistre more seriously and aggressively than ever before, of infallibility for its earthly head.

Although the subject is not immediately connected with this enquiry, we may pause for a moment to point out how Ultramontanism was connected with the political history of Europe. It seems probable that memories of the Napoleonic empire had a good deal to do with the dogma of papal infallibility. For the disappearance of the colossal despot created a void which ideal aspirations now, as on former occasions, rushed in to fill up. The same phenomenon has presented itself over and over again in European history, to go no further back, suggesting by its constant repetition that the sequence amounts to a true sociological law. After the abandonment of Rome by her Caesars, Leo the Great emerges as first founder of the temporal power. After the dissolution of the Carolingian empire came the pretensions embodied in the forged decretals of Isidore. When the Saxon dynasty showed signs of enfeeblement, Hildebrand usurped its place. And, finally, the fall of the Hohenstaufens was followed in half a century by the still more extravagant claims of Boniface VIII.

But the aggressive insolence of Romish partisans was met by at least equal insolence on the other side. Here also political events were a determining factor in the new assumptions of religious belief. For the last conflicts in the long war had, to a certain extent, been Catholic defeats. The victorious powers were either schismatic or Protestant. In particular the prestige of England, alone irreconcilable, alone invincible, had risen to an extraordinary height; and her people were not inclined to abate anything of their traditional arrogance in the hour of victory. Everything combined to raise their self-esteem. The liberty which had long been their hereditary possession was just what

[1] 'Oeuvres de J. de Bonald,' Vol. II., p. 209.

all other European nations most longed to possess, and what France by her unaided efforts had failed to secure. Napoleon was but their factor, made to engross up glorious deeds on their behalf—deeds whose transfer was effected by the victory of Waterloo. The peoples of Southern Europe were either slaves or brigands, the Russians barbarians, the Germans unpractical dreamers. No doubt this superiority of the English to other nations was in the first instance an inherent racial distinction, going back to Edward III.'s time at least. But it had since been enhanced by a sedulous study of the Bible; and earth's less fortunate children might hope by means of the same discipline to acquire as much of the same virtue and prosperity as was compatible with their natural inferiority to ourselves. Societies were formed for circulating the sacred volume abroad; and sanguine hopes were entertained that Popish darkness might vanish before the light that emanated from its open pages.

It might have been suggested that the example of an adjacent island, where Protestant ascendency had long afforded the magical volume every chance of exercising its proselytising power, gave little encouragement to such confident expectations. The fact that many, if not most, of the Irish could not read would, however, offer an explanation of this strange phenomenon; education not being, so far, one of the blessings that seemed to go with English government either at home or abroad. But a new era had dawned, and it was confidently anticipated that the Irish, thanks to Bible Societies, would shortly become a happy, united, and Protestant people. Meanwhile Ireland was sending over *her* missionaries to England, as to the United States, in the shape of pauper immigrants, destined to become the nucleus of powerful Catholic communities in both countries.

The movement for Catholic emancipation, supplying as it did the leading political issue and the most fertile theme for parliamentary eloquence from the Peace onwards, still further intensified the religious passions of the country. To say, as Lord Melbourne did, that all the wise men were for emancipation and all the fools against it, amounted to saying, what was probably true, that the vast majority of English people were opposed to this great measure of expediency and justice. In what sense Melbourne wished to be understood when he added

that 'the fools were right' has not been explained. But if, as seems probable, he referred to the demoralising influence exercised by O'Connell and his followers on the House of Commons, the fools, granting them to have been right at all, were only right by accident. For their hostility was not directed against the Irish Repealers, but against the Catholics as a body whose loyalty was doubtful and as to whose superstition there was no doubt whatever.

Sectarian animosity drew fresh nutriment from the prevalent rage for the interpretation of prophecy in the light of contemporary politics, itself a standing note of pietism. The question whether Napoleon or the Pope was Antichrist supplied a subject for conversation in every English drawing-room;[1] and, assuming Christ to be identified with Anglican Protestantism, it was a question on which opinion might reasonably be divided. What gave it practical importance was that if that apocalyptic personage had appeared under the form of the French Emperor, the end of the world might be expected in the near future, whereas, on the other alternative, it would have to wait until the Papacy was abolished.

Under the combined influence of these various forces English pietism reached its highest pitch of exaltation in the years immediately preceding Catholic emancipation. For those who prefer exact numerical statements the year 1827 may be quoted as the date of its culmination. That year saw the publication of a work by a Spanish Jesuit, Lacunza, on the 'Coming of the Messiah,' in a translation made by the celebrated Edward Irving; and it also saw the publication of what is now a far more famous book, Keble's 'Christian Year.' Irving still lives in literature, but only as the friend of Carlyle and the disappointed lover of Carlyle's future wife. There was a time, however, when his fame outshone Carlyle's. If not precisely what he had hoped to be, 'the first in divinity,' at any rate he held London spellbound as the first in popular oratory, and the most fashionable prophet of that impending judgment to which so many were looking forward.[2] Without intellectual

[1] Mozley's 'Reminiscences,' Vol. I., p. 126.

[2] So late as October, 1831, we find even Dr. Arnold writing: 'All in the moral and physical world appears so exactly to announce the coming of the

distinction, without the practical good sense so often possessed by mystics, and apparently unfitted either to command or to obey, his imposing presence, his transparent honesty, his deep affectionateness, and an inexhaustible flow of words, stamped with a certain archaic dignity of style, lifted the young Scotchman to an eminence where, in the absence of those other gifts, he could not maintain himself long—least of all in that great age of Nemesis, when the most brilliant success ever betokened the swiftest and most irremediable ruin.

'If Irving had married me,' said Mrs. Carlyle, 'there would have been no voices.' Possibly not in his chapel; but the Pentecostal manifestations could hardly have failed to break out somewhere or other; for pietism in its extreme form always tends to reproduce the phenomena of primitive Christianity in more or less hysterical excess. Curiously enough, this passionate mysticism allied itself in the Regent-square preacher with very High Church principles, including an approach to sacramentarian doctrines, and with a fanatical intolerance of nonconformity to the established religion. He condemned the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and he condemned Catholic emancipation. Pietism, in fact, was feeling its way towards a more rigid ecclesiastical organisation, and, in theory at least, towards a sterner repression of schism.

Keble's 'Christian Year' appeared, as I have said, at about the same time as Irving's apocalyptic translation from the Spanish. The poems themselves had been composed at an earlier and more peaceful period; but the saintly author evidently considered that there was a certain opportuneness in publishing them just then, and that they were likely to supply a needful antidote to the morbid excitement prevalent in religious circles. His Introduction, dated May 30, 1827, refers to 'times of much leisure and unbounded curiosity, when excitement of every kind is sought after with morbid eagerness;' and it recommends the Anglican Liturgy as offering, in opposition to such cravings, a sober standard of feeling in matters of practical religion. To a modern reader taking up

"great day of the Lord," *i.e.* a period of fearful visitation to terminate the existing state of things, whether to terminate the whole existence of the human race neither man nor angel knows' (Stanley's 'Life of Arnold,' Vol. I., p. 252). My attention was drawn to this passage by a reference in Mrs. Fawcett's 'Life of Sir W. Molesworth.'

the 'Christian Year' for the first time, Keble's tone seems, on the contrary, rather high-wrought, and such as none but a mystic could permanently maintain. This altered feeling will serve better than any other symptom as an exponent of the change in English temper since Thirlwall complained to Bunsen of the rabid millenarianism still rampant a few years later.

Keble, so to speak, discounts the Second Advent. He tries to repress the restless impatience of his contemporaries by showing that a very passable heaven on earth might be realised by attuning their emotions to the festivals and ceremonies of the Church; by using their imagination to revivify Scriptural scenes; but above all, by using their fancy to suffuse all nature, history, and present human experience with the light and colour of a visionary pietism. He is what one may call an open-air, spontaneous ritualist, preluding to the more conscious and artificially decorative efforts of his ecclesiastical successors. In both, however, the aesthetic element is but a cloudy substitute for the real goddess, the

> 'Juno whose great name
> Is Unio in the anagram——'

and whose name in history is the Church of Rome.

What we call the High Church, or more properly the Tractarian Movement, sometimes seems to be credited with the great religious revival of the earlier nineteenth century in England. I trust that enough has been already said to show that this view is a mistake. Pietism was already declining when the Oxford Movement began, and that movement was even a symptom of its decline. Judged by any standard except intellectual eminence, Evangelicalism was far more powerful, continuous, and fertile than its successor; bearing, indeed, much the same relation to Newman and Pusey that the Tudor Reformation bore to the ecclesiasticism of Montague and Laud. It has also to be noted that, in each instance, the later and noisier grew out of the earlier revival by a constant law of evolution, the same law by which primitive Christianity organised itself into the Catholic Church. And just as the early Christians found the lines on which they were to move forward marked out, and the process itself greatly facilitated, by the administrative hierarchy of the Roman empire and the example of the Jewish

priesthood, so also the ready-made forms of Anglicanism—themselves inherited from Rome—and the ever-present model of the living Roman Church did the work of a forcing-house, and consummated within a few years what otherwise might have needed more than a lifetime for its completion.

How intimately the Tractarian movement was related to Evangelicalism is shown in a more concrete manner by the fact that its great leader and only theologian of commanding genius, John Henry Newman, had been brought up as an Evangelical—owing his soul, as he expressed it, to Thomas Scott—and that he only worked his way out of Evangelical principles after years of anxious thought and religious experience. Indeed, as a High Churchman, he continued to hold and inculcate the leading ideas revived by Wesley and emphasised by Wilberforce as the essential elements of Christianity in opposition to the rationalist preaching of English eighteenth-century divines. We know what these are: they are the consciousness of pre-natal sin as a calamity inherited from the first man, the consequent doom of all men to everlasting torments, and the promise of salvation therefrom through the atoning death of the incarnate Son of God—with the guarantee of Biblical infallibility as the unquestionable basis of the whole creed. A few extracts from Newman's sermons will put his position beyond doubt.

'We have no standard of Truth at all but the Bible,'[1] says the Oxford preacher, and to that he appeals. It is, he seems to think, literally inspired, the Word of God throughout. And what does God tell us? That we are corrupt, and that 'our corruption is not merely in this action or in that, but in our *nature*.' So much is implied in the Jewish ceremonial law; and so much is expressly asserted in the history of the fall of Adam. People think that, although sinful, they could be good if they chose. But this is a profound mistake. Our impotence for all but evil can only be got rid of by deliberate and direct acts of faith in the Great Sacrifice which has been set forth for its removal. The sacrifice was a transfer of the infinite punishment which—according to theological ethics—'was our desert' to Christ, who bore it for us on the Cross.[2]

When the Israelites, acting under the divine command,

[1] 'Parochial and Plain Sermons,' Vol. II., p. 384.

[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., pp. 87–8.

were butchering whole populations, including the women and children, the weak and the infirm, it was indeed an awful office, an unutterably heart-piercing task, the thought of which fills us with the deepest pity—for the victims? no, for the executioners, who are well known to have been the most tender-hearted of mankind. But let us not forget their consolations. 'Doubtless as they slew those who suffered for the sins of their fathers their thoughts turned first to the fall of Adam, and next to that unseen state where all inequalities are righted.'[1] Perhaps their trouble was that the Canaanitish children were getting off too cheap with a comparatively painless death, while their consolation was the prospect of a more adequate retribution to be inflicted in hell. For the children, being unbaptised, and consequently unregenerate, were bound to suffer for the sin of Adam. And, apart from that sentence, they may even have had a mysterious responsibility of their own. 'Who can say in what state that infant soul is? Who can say it has not its energies of reason in some unknown sphere, quite consistently with the reality of its insensibility to the external world?'[2] Who, indeed! And who can say that the elect will not be apparently damned, quite consistently with the reality of their eternal presence in heaven?

Newman, in fact, did not so much change his theology as surround the citadel of Evangelical pietism with fresh doctrinal outworks, such as Baptismal Regeneration, the Real Presence, the necessity of supplementing faith by works, the possession of supernatural powers by the priesthood, transmitted from the Apostles by ordination, and, as a guarantee for all other doctrines, the extension of authority from the Bible to the Church. Thus he stood farther than the Evangelicals from rationalism, and his opposition to reason is more systematic than theirs. Better for the country, he thinks, 'were it vastly more superstitious, more bigoted, more gloomy, more fierce in its religion than at present it shows itself to be.'[3]

[1] *Op. cit.*, Vol. III., p. 187.

[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. III., p. 167. We may suppose that Newman continued to hold these opinions to the last, the sermons having been reprinted with his sanction, and without any contradictory footnote to the passages quoted. Besides, as will be seen hereafter, much the same views are put forward in the 'Grammar of Assent.'

[3] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 320.

At the same time, Newman, though fundamentally a mystic, is, as often happens with mystics, an acute dialectician, and would fain enlist reason on his side. But in trying to identify faith with reason, in reality he identifies reason with faith. To be convinced by reasoning, he urges, is nothing else than 'trusting the general soundness of our reasoning powers.'[1] And he adds that 'we trust them though they often deceive us;' being, indeed, obliged to do so by the conditions of life itself, by the necessity of action. Oddly enough, the existence of 'an Unseen Power whom we are bound to obey'[2] is counted among the very few things that come under a higher category than faith, things known to us as certainly as our own existence. Newman, of course, was well aware that there are some persons who either do not possess this immediate knowledge of God, or will not admit that they possess it. But these, according to him, are peculiar embodiments of the evil principle. Extreme wickedness rather than irrationality is the cause of their unbelief. Arnold's attitude towards atheism was much the same;[3] and we may therefore regard it as characteristic of the whole pietistic movement. But so useful a weapon of controversy as charging your opponents with gross moral turpitude admits of still wider applications; and we shall presently see how the Tractarians used it in defence of Biblical inspiration, or rather of what they understood by inspiration.

Among the original leaders of the Tractarian movement Newman alone was a convert from Evangelicalism in the strict sense; but his two chief associates were touched with the Evangelical tone, and were certainly what in Germany would have been called pietists. Keble had been brought up in High Church principles; but his 'Christian Year' so evidently bears the stamp of Wesley's school that Hurrell Froude objected to its publication on the ground that people would take the author for a Methodist.[4] A protracted residence in Germany brought Pusey into direct contact with the pietistic tradition; and he wrote in terms of warm admiration for its founder, Spener, whom he is said to have resembled closely, among other points, in his 'opposition to worldly amusements, to luxury, to dancing

[1] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., pp. 191–2. [2] P. 193.
[3] Stanley's 'Life of Arnold,' Vol. I., p. 352.
[4] 'Autobiography of Isaac Williams,' p. 22.

and theatres.'[1] And we find the same puritanical leanings in the other religious leaders of the time, in Arnold, in Maurice, and in Julius Hare.

What gave the Oxford movement its most distinctive character, and what has led to its being identified in popular tradition with the whole religious reaction of which in reality it formed but a single and very limited current, was its intense, conscious, and avowed antagonism from the beginning to every variety of rationalism, combined with an equally clear recognition of the dangers to be dreaded from the action of reason on faith.[2] There could no longer be a question of reconciling the two enemies. The experiment had been tried in the eighteenth century, and had failed; or if, as some believers still fondly imagined, the objections of English deism had been quelled by such reasoners as Butler and Lardner, others of a more formidable description were springing up to take their place. Since the peace England once more lay open to Continental influences;[3] and just as French Jacobinism had been the bugbear of political reactionists a generation before, so now German neology had become the bugbear of theological reactionists who could spare any attention from the subject of prophecy and its fulfilment. German literature, long a fashionable study, and now presented to public curiosity by Carlyle with more enthusiasm and knowledge than had ever before been devoted to its propagation, was impregnated with rationalism from beginning to end. German philosophy merely rung the changes on pantheism, German theology was a dully decorous surrender to Voltaire—and not always even decorous. Young Englishmen sent to Göttingen to complete their education sometimes found their way into Eichhorn's class-room, and were promised some fine fun when the lecturer came to Balaam's ass.[4] Nor was it absolutely necessary to visit Germany to be infected with the rationalistic poison. Slack as was the trade in foreign literature, various works of German theology found their way into the hands of home-staying English students of divinity, who ran

[1] Liddon's 'Life of Pusey,' Vol. I., p. 159.

[2] This is evident both from Newman's 'Apologia' and from Mozley's 'Reminiscences.'

[3] Merivale, 'Autobiography,' p. 53.

[4] 'Life of Pusey,' Vol. I., p. 74.

the risk of being betrayed by their 'deceptive use of Christian phraseology into conclusions subversive of Christianity.'[1]

At that time the advantage of passing over inconvenient phenomena in silence had not yet been discovered; neither had it occurred to apologists, at least in England, to declare without evidence that the latest results of free criticism had entirely reversed its earlier negations; nor, again, was it the fashion to discredit free enquiry by emphasising the divergencies which are the unavoidable accompaniments of freedom. Thus it happened that Hugh James Rose, a Cambridge divine, who had made himself well acquainted with the literature of modern German theology, took what would now be considered the very imprudent step of laying the fruits of his wide reading before the English public in a volume entitled 'The Present State of Protestantism in Germany.' The book is one long and bitter attack on German rationalistic theology, from Semler and Michaelis to De Wette and Bretschneider. As might be expected, Rose has no sympathy with the peculiar constitution of the German mind: he is ignorant or contemptuous of the large-hearted comprehensiveness which is ever leading it towards the union of seemingly contradictory positions. The spectacle of men calling themselves Christian ministers, still performing religious ceremonies after they had renounced all the great Catholic dogmas, at least in their scholastic sense, and still professing to take their stand on the Bible when they had denied its inspiration, denied its historical accuracy, and riddled it with disintegrating criticism from Genesis to Revelation, nay more, preaching rationalised Christianity from the pulpit, and teaching it to children in the classes for religious instruction—this to him seemed something scandalous and shocking. This surely was rank Socinianism and deism, with the addition of a deeper dishonesty than the adherents of those damnable errors, with all their moral obliquity, had shown themselves capable of in England. Above all, to a Cambridge scholar, bred upon Paley's Evidences, it must have been particularly bewildering to find a total rejection of miracles combined with an unfaltering belief in the honesty of the historians who related them. Nothing could be easier than to ridicule the so-called rationalistic explanations by which Paulus in particular had laboriously

[1] Rose's 'Present State of Protestantism in Germany,' pp. xix. and 2-3.

striven to resolve all such narratives into purely natural occurrences; and a younger German critic, David Strauss, was soon to show the insufficiency of his method. Still the problem remained, and persistently called for a solution; how to reconcile the fact that miracles do not happen, and probably cannot happen, with the other fact that they are vouched for by witnesses whom we should trust for a faithful report of ordinary events. The answer that their denial arises solely from the wicked pride of the human heart could not long satisfy serious enquirers.

Another feature of German thought, most alien from the narrow Cambridge understanding of that age, with its conceptions bounded on the one side by the eternal truth of mathematics, and on the other by the eternal perfection of Greek classic literature, was the idea of evolution in religion, then known as the theory of Accommodation. This is the notion, said to have been first put forward by Semler, that 'we are not to take all the declarations of Scripture as addressed to us, but to consider them as in many points adapted to the feelings and dispositions of the age when they originated,'[1] combined with Lessing's wider view of all religious beliefs as stages in the education of the human race.

Rose was a High Churchman, and, had he belonged to Oxford, might have led the coming movement. Indeed, the grand object of his publication was to hold up German rationalism as an awful example of what happened in religious communities where clerical orthodoxy was not maintained by a rigorous system of subscription to doctrinal formulas, with a warning to his own Church by no means to relax the system already in force. It is therefore interesting to note that the plenary inspiration and infallibility of Scripture, so summarily dealt with by Thirlwall, are assumed throughout, and their rejection exhibited as a most fatal error of German Protestantism. Even to call in question the traditional authorship of a Biblical book seems to be thought foolish, or worse. As specimens of the 'attacks' of German divines on parts of both Testaments the following, among others, are given. Gesenius and others declare the Pentateuch not to be the work of Moses. Rosenmüller adopts Astruc's theory of a double document (Elohistic and Jehovistic) in Genesis; but anything more nugatory than his reasons for

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 74.

accepting it Rose has never read.[1] 'Generally the authors of all the historical books and of Job are unknown, and they were compiled from public monuments, and acts and memoirs, so that it would be absurd to speak of their being inspired.' The Book of Isaiah was 'made up by one writer out of minor works of several.' None of Zechariah after chapter viii. is by that prophet; nor did Jonah write the book bearing his name. The Book of Daniel is not ascribed to Daniel. 'Various schemes have been proposed to take away all notion of independent authorship in the case of the Gospels.'[2] Bretschneider has brought together all the doubts he could find as to the authenticity of St. John. Eichhorn attacks the two Epistles to Timothy and that to Titus.[3] As to the general connexion between the Old and New Testament, Bauer says that all interpreters err by introducing Christian doctrines into the prophetical and poetical parts of the Old Testament;[4] and it is melancholy to find Schleiermacher declaring that 'the prophets can never be satisfactorily shown to have predicted Christ as he actually existed, nor Christianity as it was actually developed.'[5]

At the time when Rose was bringing out his attack on German rationalism a young Oxford student, Edward Bouverie Pusey by name, was making a much profounder study of Biblical criticism, as treated by German scholars, in the course of a visit to various German universities, during which he established friendly relations with teachers representing all shades of theological opinion. Two years later the visit was repeated; and Rose's book, which by that time had been translated into German, and had roused considerable indignation, even among orthodox religionists, came under his notice. Pusey's opinion of rationalism did not differ much from that expressed by the Cambridge preacher, but he disliked Rose's tone and differed from his theory of the cause to which the evil was due. According to him, it arose not from the absence of bishops and subscriptions to articles, but from the cold 'orthodoxism' of the earlier Lutheran divines, imperfectly compensated by the vague pietism which subsequently replaced it.

[1] P. 101. [2] P. 104. [3] P. 105.
[4] P. 150. [5] P. 149.

And he thought that England was threatened with a similar danger so long as her Church had nothing better to offer than the alternative between the high and dry orthodoxy of the old school, on the one side, and the undisciplined enthusiasm of the Evangelicals on the other. But he felt also that Old Testament criticism was the ground where rationalism would deliver its next assault on the Christian faith in England, and just the ground where Anglican theology was least prepared to meet it. He therefore proceeded to equip himself with all the learning needed for the coming conflict, and in no long time received the chair of Hebrew at Oxford as a reward for his labours.

While still a layman, Pusey was persuaded to write a book on German Theology in reply to Rose, who defended himself with characteristic vigour, but in such a manner as to incur the charge of having misrepresented his young adversary, who indeed was at no time distinguished for the gift of lucid exposition. But Pusey could not deny certain concessions to liberalism of which in after life he bitterly repented. He had talked about 'a new era in theology.' He had recommended 'the blending of belief and science.'[1] He admitted that episcopacy was an expedient and desirable institution, the introduction of which would be a blessing to the German Church, without quite realising that the Episcopate is an organic feature of the Church of Christ, the absence of which could not but be attended by spiritual disorder.[2] He spoke of 'the satisfaction of the Sacrifice of Christ to God's infinite justice' as 'a human system.' What this last phrase meant is not very clear; but Bishop Blomfield, to whom Pusey submitted his manuscript, objected to it as inconsistent with Anglican orthodoxy.[3] Worst of all, he betrayed some unsoundness on the question of Biblical infallibility, professing, indeed, his belief in plenary inspiration, but 'not allowing that historical passages in which no religious truth was contained were equally inspired with the rest.[4] This very moderate concession to German criticism was subsequently withdrawn. Apparently the reactionary theologians with whom he was thenceforward associated induced him to believe that the Biblical writers were miraculously protected against

[1] 'Life,' p. 163.
[2] P. 171.
[3] P. 169.
[4] P. 171.

errors in matters of fact—even such as left matters of dogma unaffected.

Pusey's chief colleagues in the Movement did not trouble themselves about Hebrew scholarship. Their method was much easier and simpler. It consisted in resting the authority of the Bible either on the authority of the Church or on the authority of conscience, whichever happened to be more convenient at the time. People complain, says Newman, that the clergy expect them to accept the Bible as God's word without offering sufficient evidence of its divine authority. But this, he tells us, is a mere pretence. They prefer trusting themselves to trusting God. For otherwise why do they not trust their conscience, which is as much a part of themselves as their reason. One might ask in reply what right Newman has to imply that his opponents habitually disregard their moral perceptions, from whatever source these may be derived. It is a mere assumption, a piece of pulpit-bullying. Secure against objection, he challenges us to show 'a man who strictly obeys the law within him, and yet is an unbeliever as regards the Bible.' It will be time enough to produce the various proofs by which the truth of the Bible is confirmed to us when the feat has been accomplished.[1] In other words, the question of Biblical evidences may be safely postponed until the Day of Judgment.

If, as Newman tells us, Whately taught him to think and to use his reason, and if the process was habitually conducted after this fashion, the future archbishop had no great cause to be proud of his pupil. The whole argument revolves on a fallacy of confusion. The man who believes that his conscience tells him what he ought to do may be said to trust it whether he obeys its injunctions or not. He may even believe that his conscience is, as Newman believed, the voice of God, without invariably, and indeed without ever doing as it tells him. Assent is not obedience. Or again, he may habitually obey his conscience, *i.e.* do what he feels is right, without believing that his moral perceptions are divinely inspired. And so doing, or not doing, he may, on purely speculative grounds, believe that Daniel is no more inspired than Judith, or that what

[1] 'Parochial and Plain Sermons,' Vol. I., p. 201.

Coleridge called the Christopaedia of Matthew and Luke is as apocryphal as the Gospel of the Infancy.

One might also ask why a higher standard of conduct should be exacted from the heretic than from the orthodox believer. Is it on the principle that faith, like charity, covers a multitude of sins? By his own daily confession the Christian is very far from impeccable. Yet it would hardly be asserted that his derelictions of duty involve disbelief in the reality of the violated law. And if disobedience is not dissent, neither is dissent disobedience. Indeed of the two it would be safer to argue that the sinful Christian does not believe in God, than that the religious sceptic wishes to be delivered from a law of righteousness, which all the time his conscience tells him is equally binding whether he accepts the doctrine of plenary inspiration or not.

Even if Newman had been referring only to men like Bentham, James Mill, or Grote, whose rejection of what he called revelation was complete, his imputations on their character would have been stupid, ignorant, or dishonest. But, to measure the full extent of his intolerance, we must remember that it began much nearer home. We know from his language about Arnold that with him to question the infallibility of the Old Testament was to forfeit the name of a Christian, and with it, we must suppose, every title to respect. Keble also, at a much later period, put the same inference in a much more summary and crushing form when he told young John Coleridge, afterwards Lord Chief Justice, that only very wicked men could engage in enquiries tending to define and restrict the notion of Biblical inspiration.

To base the authority of the Bible or any other dogma on the authority of the Church was, on the most favourable assumption as regards ecclesiastical unity, to challenge the question, on what, then, rests the authority of the Church? But no practically minded rationalist had any need to push his enquiries so far. There were other Christian communities besides the Anglican establishment, of greater antiquity, and, apart from insular prejudice, with at least equal claims to respect. Nor was this the worst difficulty. The ordained ministry of the Church of England were at odds among themselves. Her Articles, so confidently held up by Rose as an example to

German Protestantism, had notoriously been framed on a compromise, so as to include believers of the most divergent doctrinal views—a circumstance of which the Oxford leaders were soon to take the fullest advantage in their ever nearer approximation to Rome. And the vaster religious movement which preceded Tractarianism was filling both ministry and congregation with devotees whose tendencies were still more markedly in the opposite direction—towards Geneva. A curious and now forgotten episode of Church-history brought the resulting anarchy of opinion into sudden and sharp relief.

About 1820 Calvinism had grown to such a height within the establishment that the ablest man on the Bench, Herbert Marsh, Bishop of Peterborough, already mentioned as Thirlwall's predecessor in New Testament criticism, had recourse to a very drastic method for preventing its further extension in his own diocese. He drew up a paper of eighty-seven questions on points of doctrine which every candidate had to answer satisfactorily before he could be ordained, and every curate ordained elsewhere before he could be licensed. A very few inches of blank paper were allowed for the answers, which had to be short, plain, and positive, in order that the bishop might 'know whether the opinions of the persons examined accorded with those of the Church,'—that is to say with his own. On two occasions the subject was brought before the House of Lords, which, however, refused to interfere. Marsh defended himself vigorously; the other bishops remained absolutely silent.[1] There seemed no reason why a system of exclusion, founded on a directly opposite system of interpretation, should not be enforced in any other diocese.

That such a calamity did not befall the Church of England was due, above all, to her connexion with the State—an 'organic feature' of which we may say more truly than Liddon said of the Episcopate, that 'its absence could not but be attended by spiritual disorder.' For the bishops chosen by English Prime Ministers have, as a rule, been moderate and statesmanlike divines, careful not to push things to such an extremity as Dr. Marsh, even when they might feel themselves justified by what, no doubt, was his motive, the desire to protect their

[1] Harriet Martineau's 'History of England,' Vol. I., p. 381; Sydney Smith's 'Works,' Vol. II., pp. 270–91.

flocks against extreme views. And when the bishops lose their heads—as afterwards happened in the case of 'Essays and Reviews'—the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council is there to keep the balance straight.

But this subordination of the clerical to the lay element had originally been constituted on a basis which recent legislation seemed to have undermined. By the organic settlement of 1689 the whole legislative power, and practically the whole executive and judiciary powers, were reserved for members of the established Church, to the exclusion of Roman Catholics, of Protestant Dissenters, and of Jews. But the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828, and the Emancipation Act of 1829, had terminated this monopoly so far as Christians were concerned; while the abolition of Jewish disabilities seemed already in sight. Thus the State was becoming completely secularised, and that too at a moment when the pietistic reaction was leading up to a passionate reassertion of hierocratic pretensions within the Establishment.

A still heavier strain was put on the relations between Church and State by the return of the Whigs to power, and the great events to which it led. Always an anti-clerical party, they had latterly gained the reputation of being an infidel party as well; while their allies and destined successors, the philosophical Radicals, were known to be for the most part without any religious belief whatever. Bentham, the oracle of advanced Liberalism, had attacked the Church with undisguised hatred; John Mill, its rising hope, had been brought up without any belief in God. As for the middle classes, into whose hands power was passing, no very distinct ideas about their faith seem to have been entertained; but it was certain that a vast number of Dissenters were included in their ranks, who probably would demand admission to the old universities for their sons, or else set up new universities of their own, without tests and without theological teaching; while the means by which the Reform Bill had been carried seemed to show that they had little scruple in using threats, or even violence, in order to push their measures through a reluctant legislature.

Such was the state of affairs when Lord Grey advised the bishops to put their house in order. It is not clear whether he

intended this as a warning to apply to themselves the rest of the Biblical quotation, and prepare for immediate death, that is to say, for the loss of their seats in the House of Lords, if not for the disestablishment and disendowment of their Church. Perhaps he was only hinting that they had better attend more exclusively to their pastoral duties for the future. It is not unlikely that a certain curtailment and redistribution of the ecclesiastical revenues may have entered into his views. Anyhow, assuming, as the Oxford High Churchmen did, that he was actuated by hostile motives, the Liberal leader showed his skill by attacking the enemy's position at its weakest point, the temporalities of the Irish establishment.

The Protestant Church of Ireland had long been a scandal to religion. Set up from political motives as a bulwark of English ascendency, it appropriated to the use of a small minority, comprising the richest part of the community, revenues originally assigned to the endowment of what still continued to be the faith of the vast majority. It had never performed the functions of a missionary church, and many of its preferments had no duties attached to them, or duties which could have been performed at a much lower rate of remuneration. The parochial clergy were, on the whole, a very deserving body, and had recently become objects of compassion from the hardships and dangers to which they were subjected by their anomalous position among a bitterly hostile population. On the other hand, the Irish Protestant episcopate, although adorned with some very eminent names, had not acquired during the two and a half centuries of its existence any great reputation for sanctity or moral worth. But whatever might be said in praise or blame of these dignitaries, to the Liberal mind one thing at least was certain—there were too many of them. Four archbishops and eighteen bishops, receiving among them one hundred and fifty thousand pounds a year, constituted, in the language of political economy, a supply vastly exceeding the demand of eight hundred thousand people. Lord Grey's government proposed to suppress two archbishoprics and eight bishoprics, reserving for the legislature the right to dispose of their revenues as it thought fit. Subsequent events proved that, in the opinion of the Liberals, the fund thus accruing would be most fitly devoted to secular uses.

When Lord Grey had taken his stand on the highest principles of reason, which in this instance were principles of justice and expediency as well, it was quite in order that his theological opponents, avowedly representing the cause of unreason, should take their stand on the principles of folly and wrong. They had already agreed to stake their dogmatic convictions on the impeccable morality and infallible historical accuracy of the records kept by a lying and bloodthirsty priesthood.[1] They now proceeded to stake the honour of their holy Mother Church on the continuance of a system whereby ten useless and worldly-minded prelates were gorged with the plunder of a famished people, claiming the proud title of Catholic by an older and more august investiture than theirs. And the occasion chosen for declaring war on the modern spirit of righteousness and humanity was well fitted to exhibit the incongruity of their ideals with all that the best and most enlightened Englishmen now held most dear.

On Sunday, July 14, 1833, John Keble was appointed to preach the Assize Sermon before the King's Judges in St. Mary's, Oxford. One would have thought that then, if ever, when honest men without distinction of calling or belief met together for the requital of wrongs done to society as such, the distinction between the spiritual and temporal powers, as also the doctrinal distinctions separating good citizens from one another, might have been momentarily merged in their common eagerness for the vindication of innocence and the avenging of crime. Such, however, was not Keble's opinion, nor was it the opinion of his friends. His text was taken from a narrative in the first book of Samuel, where the falsifying hand of a prophetic or sacerdotal historian has been most evidently at work in the interests of his order. The object of this personage, whoever he may have been, was to create a prejudice against the heroic but ill-fated founder of that monarchy to which the Jews owed their continued existence as a nation, and the Christian Church the possibility of ever having existed at all.

[1] I do not think that such a designation will be found too strong by any one who has mastered the evidence going to show that the stories of wholesale massacre in the Hexateuch are post-exilian fabrications. I am also well aware that, as Ed. Meyer has shown, priesthoods are generally distinguished for their superior humanity.

There is, however, a tragic grandeur about his style which lifts the whole fiction above the level of ordinary calumny to the supreme heights of literary splendour and theocratic terror: in Keble's application the malice alone remains, the sublimity is gone. Saul apparently stands for the Liberal government, and Samuel for the defenders of the threatened Irish temporalities. But the preacher is not long content to occupy such very limited ground, or to expend his eloquence on the defence of such very uninspiring interests. He soon launches out into a comprehensive indictment of the whole English nation—not frankly indeed, not in plain, straightforward language—but still so as to leave no doubt about his meaning. Various symptoms of what he calls national apostasy are described, their presence in the actual state of English politics and society being mostly left for his audience to verify. One charge, however, is sufficiently direct and categorical. This is the terrible accusation that religious intolerance has almost ceased to exist. We place confidence in people without first asking whether their theological belief agrees with our own. Offices are conferred on unorthodox believers, partnerships formed with them, boys sent to their schools, and girls given to them in marriage, whereas we should never even enter their houses. And there is a growing impatience of clerical dictation, which can only be interpreted as a symptom of enmity to Christ himself. As to the repeal of religious disabilities, it may or may not be necessitated by reasons of political expediency; but assuredly to rejoice over such concessions as if they were something to congratulate ourselves on is the sign of a bad spirit. In short, the principles of Hebrew theocracy are no longer recognised as binding on the modern State. And this amounts to saying either that the Old Testament is not infallible in faith and morals, or that its principles are not for ever binding on all mankind.

What Keble, by his own acknowledgment, had in view when he delivered this violent scolding, was the threatened abolition of the Irish bishoprics. When he printed it, that 'calamity'—to use his own language—'had already overtaken the Church of God.' The sees had been suppressed, '*contrary to the suffrage of the Bishops of England and Ireland.*' The time was to come when Keble would support a far more

sweeping measure of disestablishment and disendowment—also carried against episcopal suffrages—on the ground of simple justice. It is gravely questionable whether the author of the Assize Sermon would ever have reached that wider perception of moral truth unaided by the 'march of mind,' across which he and other saintly persons were throwing their whole influence, a generation earlier.

Newman tells us that he used to keep the anniversary of Keble's Assize Sermon as the birthday of the Movement. What the Tractarians undertook then was the defence of a cause not only reactionary but rotten, the cause of Irish Church sinecures, the cause of Protestant ascendency, the cause of episcopal dictation in ecclesiastical legislation, the cause of Old Testament infallibility, of divinely commissioned massacre and murder, of religious exclusiveness enforced by social ostracism.

It was not, however, on the lines of the poet-preacher that the conflict with modern enlightenment was eventually fought out. Newman sided with Keble about the suppressed sees, complaining, in his rhetorical style, that 'half the candlesticks of the Irish Church were extinguished without ecclesiastical sanction,'[1] and his views about Old Testament infallibility were to all appearances the same. But his intellect was far more philosophical than Keble's; his ideas naturally tended towards a more comprehensive and systematic arrangement; as a convert also to High Church principles, not brought up in them like his associate, he felt more keenly the need of finding a logical foundation for authority, of deciding on other than sentimental grounds between the competitive claims on religious faith put forward by conflicting authorities. For him, at least, the prospect of disestablishment had no terrors: the interesting question was, how could the Church of England maintain her old position of pre-eminence if the threatened catastrophe came about? And it was in view of this eventuality that he and his friends began issuing the famous 'Tracts for the Times.'

The series ran to ninety numbers, of which the first and last, both written by Newman, alone possess any historical

[1] Letter to Whately, *apud* Liddon, 'Life of Pusey,' Vol. I., p. 267; also quoted in an appendix to the 'Apologia' (p. 381).

importance. Tract I. is especially addressed to the clergy. It reminds them that they are a privileged order, with a just claim to peculiar spiritual gifts, originally derived from the Apostles, and transmitted through the ages by episcopal ordination. Pretensions so closely resembling those of the Roman hierarchy involved an ever nearer approximation to the Roman doctrine and discipline; and the object of Tract XC. is to show that an Anglican clergyman may hold the theology of Trent consistently with fidelity to his ordination vows. On the Bishop of Oxford's objecting to this interpretation, the series was discontinued, and after some years more of hesitation Newman, with some others of the party, seceded to Rome, thus bringing the Movement, as originally constituted, to an end.

An amiable member of the party, Isaac Williams, consoled himself with the reflexion that of the actual contributors to the Tracts Newman, who alone had been brought up as an Evangelical, alone forsook the Anglican Church. It seems probable, however, that Hurrell Froude would have taken the same road but for his premature death; and as it was, W. G. Ward, the ablest of Newman's younger disciples, went over a few weeks before his master. The band who rallied under Pusey's leadership counted for nothing at Oxford, and intellectually had little weight in the country. Moreover, Puseyism, like the ship in the 'Arabian Nights,' continued to suffer from the fatal attraction of the magnetic mountain at Rome, the members who had most iron in their composition being the most susceptible to its influence. That the sacerdotal party should subsequently have become known as Ritualists, marks a still deeper descent in the scale of unreason, without a correspondingly stronger hold on the allegiance of aesthetic ophelists. On the decorative side also, Rome is a formidable competitor, and certainly runs no risk of seeing any of her own devotees drawn away by the charms of a rival establishment.

If Isaac Williams unduly depreciated the significance of Newman's secession, others have erred in the opposite direction by overestimating its importance. Whatever course the great leader adopted, his appeal to authority was foredoomed to failure. His method suffered from that fatal flaw in all traditionalist logic, the tendency to spontaneous decomposition exhibited in the multiplication of authorities and in their

internecine conflict. The object of Keble and Newman was, first of all, to resist the inroads of an infidel secularism by rehabilitating the Church in her pristine majesty; and in the next place, both as a means towards this end, and as an end in itself, to stimulate the devotion of her sons and daughters by the freer distribution of spiritual gifts, by more imposing ceremonies, by a more searching penetration into the secrets of the individual conscience. They found that conscience reeling under the terrible weight of responsibility thrown on it by Evangelicalism, and fatigued by a monotonous and barren reference to the 'one sacrifice,' all visible representations of which had been studiously withheld. It turned with enthusiasm to the new guidance, and joyfully surrendered the burdensome obligation of a private judgment which had hardly ever been really exercised. But the more vigorously and successfully the work of reorganisation was pushed on, the more alarmingly did it recall what the Tractarians themselves had begun by repudiating, the doctrine and discipline of Rome. They had appealed to popular prejudice; they had called up the ghosts of superstition and fanaticism; and they were answered by a host of spectres, whose animosity was turned in the first instance against themselves. While denouncing modern individualism, they had expected to be let pick and choose in the past, to mark out for study just those seventeenth-century divines whose teaching accorded with their own. Before long the whole seventeenth century was up in arms about them, with its Cromwell against their St. Charles, its Puritans and Latitudinarians against their Anglo-Catholic Fathers, its Miltons and Lockes against their Bramhalls and Bulls, its philosophy and science against their patristic and scholastic learning. It was remembered that the first generation of Anglican Stuarts had been followed by a second generation of Romanising Stuarts in a state of permanent conspiracy against the laws and the religion of England. Bringing charges of 'national apostasy' was a game that two could play at; and to desert the Reformation seemed a dereliction more justly liable to that reproach than the conduct of those who were working out the ancient principles of English liberty to their furthest consequences.

Even a united Church could hardly have wrested the

control of ecclesiastical legislation from the modern State. And the Church of England was not united, had even been reduced to more hopeless anarchy by the effort to rally her forces against an infidel government. But the irony of fate had not exhausted itself in this confusion of tongues among the unbuilders of Babel. I have already dwelt on the extraordinary array of intellect and character which had been attracted to the Christian ministry by the great religious revival of the period succeeding the fall of French domination in Europe, involving a conspicuous diversion of ability from the service of the world to the service of the Church; while even among the laity an increasing proportion of the noblest intelligences showed the influence of religious ideas in their words and works. But the Tractarian movement could not claim above a quarter of the new energy thus consecrated to religion. The names of Keble, Newman, Hurrell Froude, W. G. Ward, and Church among the clergy, Gladstone and Roundell Palmer among the laity, proved, indeed, with what high and diversified powers the most reactionary principles could coexist. But the list could not be extended without drawing on a class whose adhesion confers no particular prestige on the creed to which it is given, their preferences being determined by authority, whether openly acknowledged as such, or disguised under the name of private judgment. Lord Ashley belongs to Evangelicalism. Peacock, Sedgwick, Whewell, and Merivale stand, on the whole, outside party. But the various shades of liberal theology show an array of ability and virtue comprising more than half the total amount given to the service of religion. Among the clergy we find the names of Blanco White, Whately, Milman, Arnold, Baden Powell, Julius Hare, Thirlwall, John Sterling, Maurice, and Arthur Stanley; of James Martineau among the Nonconformist ministers, of Francis Newman and Tennyson among the Anglican laity; of Robert and Elizabeth Browning among the Nonconformist laity. All these may be reckoned as opponents of sacerdotalism through their whole career, while more than half of them more or less openly gave up the belief in dogma and miracle before its close.

There is nothing to surprise us in such a development of pietism, if the explanation offered in a former chapter of the whole religious revival be accepted as correct. If, as I suggested,

it arose from a gradual upheaval of the more uneducated and sentimental classes, bringing with them their characteristic conceptions into the higher circles of civilisation, and imposing them at last on the highest summits of thought, then we shall be prepared to find a certain innovating temper, a revolutionary boldness even, about the whole movement, unfavourable to stereotyped creeds. Even the Tractarians had their share of that subversive spirit, and were therefore more keen to detect its presence and possibilities in other minds. Thus they recognised the liberal theologians as their most formidable rivals, before those theologians had become conscious of their own tendencies, and attacked their methods with inquisitorial zeal as the first step towards complete infidelity.

Even standing alone, the Broad Church school would have been an overmatch for the Catholicising reactionaries at the moment of their fierce struggle for leadership in the Church, and would have ruined their schemes of reorganisation by acting as an element of dispersion and decomposition on the whole religious life of the age. But Arnold, Milman, and the others did not stand alone. Much as it might have scandalised them to hear it said, the liberal and reasoning religionists, clerical and lay, who led the left wing of the whole pietistic movement, occupied the extreme right of a much vaster intellectual movement whose left wing stood outside Christianity altogether, joining hands with a parallel evolution in France and Germany. To confront such an array was to face the certainty of being outflanked and rolled up.

Thus, whatever else Keble and Newman accomplished, they totally failed in their original design, which was to arrest the destructive action of reason on religious belief, by winning for the English clergy a higher authority as referees in matters of faith. To set up an infallible tradition did not make Biblical infallibility or the Athanasian creed more credible—least of all when the tradition itself went to pieces in the struggle between rival Churches, or rival parties in the same Church.

It may be claimed on behalf of Newman, and of the other High Church leaders who joined in his secession, that they enabled great numbers of English people to retain or recover their faith by placing it under the protection of the Roman Church. It is, however, very questionable whether such

adhesions have any significance whatever for the intellectual life of the country; whether they imply any real increase or even conservation of what was once known as faith; whether Rome herself has not lost more than she has gained by the accession of so many unquiet souls to her already mutinous ranks. And, apart from this subtle infiltration of scepticism, her position has been sapped by an influence which, acting on all religious communities, acts with the greatest proportionate effect on the most authoritative.

When Newman began to write, Biblical infallibility was accepted by nearly all religious believers, as the necessary alternative to complete infidelity. To believe so much proved the capacity for believing a great deal more; and in the absence of a sound logical training many Protestants, not otherwise of deficient intelligence, let themselves be led on to accepting the infallibility of tradition, of the Primitive Church, of the Roman Church, and of the Pope. But since then, under decorous circumlocutions, this dogma has been set aside, even among the successors of Pusey, avowedly in deference to modern criticism; and apparently the analogous claims of tradition—primitive or otherwise—have been similarly abandoned. Now, it might have been supposed, and indeed it was supposed by many, that the loss of so great an authority, and the general sense of insecurity wrought by the admission of destructive criticism into what seemed the fundamentals of religious belief, would create a proportionately greater demand for certainty, and a readier submission to the dictation of authority elsewhere. With the decay of traditionalism and mysticism, scepticism steps in as an aid to faith.

And so it might have been but for two decisive circumstances. The first is that whatever tends to destroy a Protestant's belief in the infallibility, or the inspiration, or the authenticity of the Bible tells to a precisely equal degree against the authority of a Church which guarantees its divine authorship. The second is that what we call the Higher Criticism has been accepted by many Catholics, to the extent of leading them to regard large portions of Scripture as unhistorical, or, in plain language, as fictitious. There is, they think, the same certainty about its conclusions that there is about the accepted teachings of astronomy or geology, which are beyond the reach of

theological contradiction. Dogmatic declarations to the contrary may be dealt with in various ways. It may be frankly admitted that they are mistaken, at whatever cost to infallibility; or the Church may have gone beyond her proper sphere in formulating them; or their meaning may be something quite different from what was formerly supposed. But, on any alternative, the security once associated with a profession of the Catholic faith has ceased to exist. At this rate the personality of God and the immortality of the soul may, as Schleiermacher held, be no part of true religion. And to the lay understanding at least, which is the understanding of most people, the pantheist or the humanitarian has nothing to gain by going to mass. As for the clergy, our future Newmans will hardly feel tempted to exchange a position like that of Canon Cheyne for a position like that of the Abbé Loisy.

It has been said that the Church of England is what Newman has made her. It might be said with as much truth that England is what the Stuarts have made her. They certainly did a good deal for her fleet, as the Tractarians have done for the comeliness and efficiency of the Church services. But the original purpose of the Tracts has been defeated not less thoroughly than the designs of the first Charles and of the second James. As Mrs. Browning observed, they were rather Tracts against the Times than for the Times; and the times have got the better of their authors. National apostasy, in Keble's sense, has been carried to an extreme which makes the conditions under Lord Grey's government seem mediaeval in comparison. The State has gone its way, remodelling old establishments and reinterpreting old dogmas, with the most complete indifference as to whether its decrees were 'contrary to the suffrages of the Bishops of England and Ireland' or not. Worse still, by what Keble might have called a mysterious and awful dispensation of Providence, the chief instrument employed for this fatal work of secularisation has been the darling child of Anglicanism, the most distinguished ornament for intellect and character of the High Church party, if not the most distinguished Englishman of the whole century. By Gladstone the endowment of Maynooth and of Peel's godless colleges was supported; by Gladstone popular unsectarian

education was sanctioned; by Gladstone the Irish Church was disestablished and disendowed; by Gladstone's government theological tests in the English universities were abolished; finally, an avowed and aggressive agnostic was admitted into Gladstone's cabinet, favoured with his confidence, and charged with the preparation of his biography.

'Grace,' exclaims Pascal, in the highest flight of his sublime eloquence, 'grace can never want defenders, being all-powerful to create them for herself.' Reason, unfortunately, is not omnipotent; but she shares with grace the glorious privilege of finding and forming defenders even in the ranks of her bitterest enemies.

A far greater number of High Churchmen have followed Gladstone on the path of political liberalism than have followed Newman on the path to Rome. Probably a majority of well-educated Anglicans would now profess somewhat democratic opinions, while not a few have gone a long way in the direction of socialism. According to all it is a traditional principle with the Church to side with the oppressed against the oppressors, with law against tyranny, and generally with the poor against the rich. And they might fairly urge that the anti-liberal principles of their original leader were rather the survival of an old Oxford prejudice than an essential element in the religious reformation he started. But it is by no means clear where the accidents end and the essentials begin. Perhaps no inmate of Keble College would agree with Keble in looking on the social and political abandonment of religious exclusiveness as an act of national apostasy. Safeguards of the faith, it might be contended, are not the faith itself. But what is of faith, and where are authoritative definitions of faith to be found? Highly ornamented buildings for the celebration of divine service are good as far as they go, but they can hardly tell the worshippers what to believe; nor can Church Congresses put forward any claim to infallibility. Granting, what cannot be proved, that our bishops and curates are descended from the Apostles by a continuous chain of ordination, it is by no means self-evident that the process converts them into supernatural depositories of revealed truth; for on such a theory the difference between the Roman and Anglican Churches would be inexplicable. Besides, the supposed promise of infallibility

given to the Apostles rests on texts of Scripture whose authenticity can no longer be treated as above dispute. High Churchmen who call the stories in Genesis myths, and put their own interpretation on their religious meaning, cannot refuse others the right of treating Gospel texts after a similar method; all the less because certain predictions about the end of the world would necessitate a very free handling, if the credit of their author or of their reporters is to be preserved intact.

The early Tractarians took the Bible on the authority of tradition; and there seems no doubt that its plenary inspiration was accepted by all but a few scholars within the Church. Modern criticism has shown that the Church, or those claiming to speak in her name, was mistaken on this point, and therefore fallible on every point. The two authorities fall together; or the Church's authority can only be upheld by a system of exegesis so contrary to the rules of interpretation, as hitherto accepted, that not a word in theology is safe from having a meaning put upon it totally unlike that which it has hitherto been supposed to carry.

Nor indeed have we far to go for examples of the process. Newman mentions among other doctrines held by the whole Catholic Church, the imputation of Adam's sin to his descendants. His present followers do not believe in a personal Adam, and must therefore understand something widely different from what he and his hearers understood by 'imputation of sin' and 'descent.' He also speaks of the reconciliation of God the Father 'to us sinners by the death of Christ'; and a comparison with other passages shows him to have meant, what nearly every theologian then meant, that this reconciliation involved our salvation from hell by the vicarious sufferings of the Redeemer. But this particularly atrocious theory of the atonement has now been abandoned even by the most orthodox Anglicans, thanks largely to the influence of Maurice, though what they have put in its place no one seems able to explain.

Another dogma included with undoubted confidence in the High Church profession of faith was the endlessness of future torments for the wicked. But already in the thirties and forties High Church laymen such as Southey [1] and Wordsworth [2]

[1] Crabb Robinson's 'Diary,' Vol. II., p. 315.
[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. III., p. 210.

were found to deny it privately in strong terms, while even Faber did not attempt to defend it.[1] Modern divines prefer to remain silent on the subject; but they are admittedly free to follow Maurice's interpretation in this instance, thereby displacing the whole axis of their original theology. Already indeed, 'the sense of sin, original and actual, as an evil attaching to one and all,' has been removed from its old place as 'the initial element of all true religion'—an arrangement fully accepted even by Coleridge—the fact of the Incarnation being substituted for it. But the Incarnation itself may be explained away to any extent, particularly with German help;[2] and the high Eucharistic doctrine with which it has become intimately associated in recent religious developments, may even accelerate the process. For the union of God with bread and wine suggests by its paradoxicality a mystical evasion of the literal sense, capable of extension to the whole circle of metaphysical notions connected with the union of God and man.

We have seen what the Movement failed to do; we have now to determine what it did, in reference to the general trend of English thought, dismissing as much as possible from our minds the current commonplaces on the subject.

The first result of the propaganda was a wide diffusion of sacerdotal ideas among the younger clergy and a fair number of the laity. An unnamed controversialist quoted by Newman in 1839 as 'the scoffing author of the Via Media,' speaks of the Via as 'crowded with young enthusiasts who never presume to argue with any one except against the propriety of arguing at all.' Baden Powell, destined hereafter to a brief blaze of celebrity as the boldest of Broad Church essayists, admitted that 'Tractarian opinions and views of theology were extensively adopted and strenuously upheld, and were daily gaining ground among a considerable and influential portion of the members as well as ministers of the Established Church.' Isaac Taylor complained that the spread of these doctrines had 'severed the religious community into two portions, between which every

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] I may even add, with French help; for the Abbé Loisy, if I understand him rightly, looks on divinity as a heathenish idea to which the early Christian Church had to accommodate herself.

man would soon be compelled to make his choice.' By the irony of circumstance the young enthusiasts of the Via Media found themselves denounced by one of their own bishops as reviving 'the worst evils of the Romish system,' in their reaction against the right of private judgment.[1]

In reality the Movement did not so much alter men's convictions as possess itself of a vast body of pre-existing religious sentiment, which it led by pre-existing channels toward a predetermined goal. In view of an eternal life beyond the grave, pietism fixes the believer's whole attention on its tremendous possibilities, and degrades the world of experience into a mere preparation for the imagined world to come. With this crushing weight of responsibility on his conscience, the religious believer begins by brooding in solitude over his own chance of perdition or salvation, then joins in the devotional exercises and mutual confidences of a few other like-minded persons. Together they ransack the records of similar experiences handed down from earlier periods of religious excitement, reviving obsolete practices and tapping buried sources of inspiration, searching out ways of access to the secrets of what is unseen or is to be. Lastly, with the decline of individual ardour and energy, they have recourse to the ready-made organisation provided by the experience of ages for the outdoor and indoor relief of the destitute souls whom sloth, disease, imbecility, or old age have left without the capacity for self-help.

Such in general outline is the course described by religious thought in England during the century which began with Wesley's call and ended with the last Tract for the Times. But such a purely schematic representation answers very imperfectly to the things of actual life, especially when we are dealing with such a complex civilisation as our own. Not all Evangelicals, nor perhaps a majority of them, followed Newman; and what their party lost by the diversion of so much strong religious feeling into new channels was more than compensated by the advantage of posing as the champions of English Protestantism against Rome. In this way they could appeal to the most violent feeling of what their countrymen were susceptible. Long ages of oppression and spoliation

[1] J. H. Newman's 'Essays, Critical and Historical,' Vol. I., pp. 264–6. The passages in quotation marks are cited by Newman.

exercised by the Holy See, followed by other ages of stealthy plotting for the recovery of its lost prey, have imbued the English people with a deadly hatred and fear of what it calls Popery. On the other hand, the articles and liturgy of the English Church were purposely so framed as to enable that numerous body of Englishmen who still retained their old creed under Elizabeth to join in the only public worship authorised by law. Of this arrangement the Tractarians took full advantage, claiming, not unjustly, the right to interpret legal obligations by legal rules. But it gave them a bad name with the unlearned. As they approached ever nearer to conformity with Roman standards, the cry raised against them of treason and apostasy grew louder and louder, until the whole movement was violently arrested, and its leaders silenced, driven over the border, or dispersed.

Their argumentative overthrow was due in the first instance to such Broad Churchmen as Whately, Arnold, and Baden Powell, in the last instance to the rationalistic current by which these men were supported and borne along. But the fruits of victory, for the moment at least, fell to others. The Evangelicals, now more fitly designated as Low Churchmen, remained masters of the field. They had received a large leaven of the old arid orthodoxy, and had become more narrow, fanatical, and intolerant than before. Hateful as a party to all well-educated and liberal-minded persons, they were still strong enough to prevent doubts about what they called religion from finding public expression. A certain latitudinarian tradition which had long survived from the preceding century now seemed to be finally dying out. As for the great English school of deism whence the rationalistic movements of Scotland, France, and Germany had chiefly sprung, it was never mentioned but as something obsolete and exploded.

It would, however, be unjust to make the Low Church responsible for an intolerance which belongs to the very essence of pietism, and was shared by every party that partook of its spirit. If Newman and his friends had not been able definitely to substitute authority and tradition for scientific evidence, they succeeded at least in crushing out the faint beginnings of Biblical criticism which had appeared in the late

twenties. They had also excluded the teaching of physical science from Oxford.[1] As taught at Cambridge, it does not seem to have had any very illuminating effect. We hear of a Cambridge rationalist party in 1828—perhaps disciples of Coleridge—and of their taking Pusey's side against Rose, but nothing seems to have come of it.[2] In 1834 Thirlwall was driven from Trinity by Dr. Wordsworth for supporting the admission of Dissenters to degrees, and opposing the compulsory attendance of undergraduates at chapel. Whewell, who succeeded Wordsworth as Master of Trinity, was a little more liberal; but he regarded the constitution of Church and State in England as the ideal of reason.

Public opinion in the country was hardly, if at all, more advanced than at the universities. John Mill's readers were probably the most tolerant class of the community; yet we are told that the circulation of his organ, the 'London Review,' was injured by the suspicion of irreligion. Mill himself had intended at one time to write a history of the French Revolution, and had even collected materials for the purpose; but he abandoned his design on finding that it would lead to the disclosure of his religious opinions. Their publication, it is said, would have entailed the loss of his post at the India House.

Unbelief, where it existed, was a thing to be carefully concealed. Romilly's son forgot this rule, and showed so little consideration for the memory of the great law-reformer as to print a prayer, written by his father, in which he 'makes not the least allusion to any Christian tenet.' 'What right,' asks Brougham, had the biographer 'to proclaim to the world that' Romilly 'was not a Christian?'[3]

Nothing proves the reactionary spirit of the thirties better than the fate of the celebrated Appropriation Clause. It will be remembered that Lord Grey, in suppressing certain Irish bishoprics and other ecclesiastical positions of emolument, reserved for Parliament the disposal of the revenues thus obtained, with the evident intention of devoting them to secular purposes. Subsequently Lord Grey's successors, Melbourne and Russell, proposed that the money should be used

[1] 'Life and Letters' of Sir Charles Lyell, Vol. II., p. 82 (1843).
[2] Liddon's 'Life of Pusey,' Vol. I., p. 175.
[3] Macvey Napier's 'Correspondence,' p. 333.

for the education of the Irish people, irrespective of creeds. Their measure passed the House of Commons repeatedly, but on each occasion was thrown out by the Lords, and at last withdrawn in despair. They had the support of parliamentary Liberalism, but the people at large were evidently hostile to the secularisation of Church property, or they would have forced the Lords to give way. In studying what happened to the Irish Church thirty years later, we shall have occasion to observe how deeply legislation was affected by the intervening revolution in religious thought.

During the whole of this period great enthusiasm for education prevailed, or was professed; and much was done by lectures, cheap publications, and the like, for what people called the diffusion of useful knowledge. But even the liberal Church leaders, Arnold and Whately, much as they loved education, seemed to consider it a positive evil when unaccompanied by religious instruction. Arnold withdrew from the London University because theology was given no place in its curriculum—not a surprising omission, as it had been established for unsectarian purposes; and he discountenanced that most excellent periodical the 'Penny Magazine,' because its pages were not weighted with religious articles. If it taught morality, that only made things worse, for morality without religion was poison.[1] So bitterly intolerant was this great educationist that he would willingly have sent James Mill to Botany Bay for not agreeing with his religious opinions.[2] Being himself a reformer, for him the evidence of Christianity lay chiefly in what he considered its efficacy as a reforming and moralising power. The opposition between one Christian denomination and another disappeared before the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian society. Priestcraft, on the other hand, as interfering with this Christian spirit of comprehensiveness, was essentially an anti-Christian thing, to be cast out as the mystery of iniquity.[3]

Whately approached the question from a more intellectual

[1] Stanley's 'Life of Arnold,' Vol. I., p. 247.
[2] Wilfrid Ward, 'W. G. Ward and the Catholic Revival,' p. 458.
[3] 'Life,' Vol. II., p. 53.

point of view. Inheriting the eighteenth-century view that Christianity could be proved by external evidence, he wished that evidence to be taught even to the pupils of elementary schools in a form acceptable to all denominations, and of course also in the universities, London included, lest religion should be placed at a disadvantage in comparison with other branches of knowledge, for all the propositions of which good reasons could be given. With him, as with Newman, a strong logical faculty went with an extraordinary credulity about matters of fact; and while his faith was much less fanatical than Arnold's, it embraced a far larger number of absurdities, from the longevity of the antediluvial patriarchs to the juggles of modern spiritualism. Ill-breeding and exorbitant vanity made him personally more intolerant of contradiction; although very wide differences of opinion, if kept at a sufficient distance, left the generosity of his character and the breadth of his intellectual sympathies unaffected.

As a result of our enquiry, it would seem that neither the great revival of religious enthusiasm, nor the extraordinary accession of genius and learning received by the Church of England during so many years, nor the claim to be the sole depository of revealed truth put forward on her behalf by some of the most gifted among these recruits, had strengthened her position against hostile criticism. On the contrary, they had been a source of disunion and weakness. The dread of Rome and the dread of rationalism were just strong enough to hold each other in check. As was natural in the home of compromise, truth passed for being a mean between two extremes; and several distinct directions disputed among themselves the honour of being the genuine Via Media. But none of them could show a fixed point of departure nor a goal where all might meet. Unable alike to advance or to recede, and occupied with the pettiest personalities, Church parties were dying of intellectual inanition, as the people were dying of hunger in their factories and fields. Yet they were still strong enough to prevent other guides from undertaking a task which they had proved powerless to perform; for while the clergy were sinking ever lower in popular estimation, they retained nearly the whole education of the country in their hands.

How England was rescued from this deplorable condition by two influences, imported from the European Continent, and brought to bear almost simultaneously on the minds of the new generation, will be related in the following chapter.

NOTE ON PAGE 351, LAST LINE.

Keble died in 1866, more than three years before the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church. The statement in the text is therefore, as it stands, not strictly accurate. What actually happened is this: In the course of a conversation at Hursley between Keble and Newman about the Oxford election of 1865, Newman said that had he been still a member of the University, he 'must have voted against Mr. Gladstone, because he was giving up the Irish Establishment.' 'On this,' Newman relates, 'Keble came close to me and whispered in my ear (I cannot recollect the exact words, but I took them to be), "And is not that just?"' (Coleridge's 'Life of Keble,' Vol. II., p. 529). What I have said, therefore, about Keble's change of attitude remains substantially true. Keble's saying that 'most of the men who had difficulties about' the inspiration of Holy Scripture 'were too wicked to be reasoned with,' will be found on p. 582 of the same volume.

CHAPTER IX

THE TURN OF THE TIDE

Not often has English literature fallen so low as during the great revival of religious interests in England. Limiting our attention to the southern portion of this island, with whose intellectual history alone we are here concerned, and therefore leaving Scott out of account, it may be affirmed that no great literary work in prose or poetry was written by any Englishman between 'Don Juan' and the 'Pickwick Papers.' We may even go further and say that no great and serious work of prolonged and concentrated interest was produced between 'Hyperion' and 'Jane Eyre.' Carlyle's 'Sartor Resartus' and his 'French Revolution' may be quoted as exceptions; but Carlyle cannot, any more than Scott, be counted among truly English men of letters; his whole training was different; he moved about London as a stranger; his religious attachments were so utterly alien that a child of the English Church, or even of English Nonconformity, has great difficulty in understanding his language about Newman and Keble.[1] After a time he became to some extent, though never perfectly, assimilated, and entered more fully into the stream of English thought; but that time did not arrive until he had been settled in London for some years. His influence began earlier; but it was a foreign influence, and directed towards the acclimatisation of foreign ideas. Tennyson will also be mentioned; and his early poems, published in 1830 and 1832, are certainly first-class literature; but they are very short, and there are very few of them. On the other hand, the production of periodical literature was enormous. Much of it reached a very high order of

[1] He also brought with him to London the Scotch notion of Cromwell as a 'Fanatic-Hypocrite,' which he ridiculed so unsparingly in 'Hero-Worship' after Mill had opened his eyes to Cromwell's greatness.

excellence, and is still widely read—more widely, indeed, than when it first appeared; but even collected essays exercise less influence than books originally planned and published as organic wholes; and many of the best essays printed during that period were not republished in book form until a considerably later date.

Wordsworth has said that the true antithesis to poetry is not prose, but science; and in fact what was impoverishing literature, both in poetry and prose, was, next to the religious agitation, the diversion of intellectual interest to physical science. A certain movement in this direction was already making itself felt at the beginning of the century, when scientific lectures at the Royal Institution were attended by large audiences, among whom ladies were included.[1] But the more general spread of a taste for science through the country, as evinced by the sale of books on the subject, seems to date from 1830, the year when Sir John Herschel's 'Discourse on the Study of Natural Philosophy' was published as the opening volume of Lardner's 'Cabinet Cyclopaedia.' It 'captivated readers of all classes,'[2] and, if we may judge by a reference in Miss Edgeworth's 'Helen,' was discussed by cultivated ladies in fashionable drawing-rooms. In the following year the British Association was founded. Not long afterwards a ludicrous story to the effect that creatures like human beings had been detected by a powerful telescope on the surface of the moon, obtained wide circulation and caused considerable excitement. Such a hoax would not have been attempted had not interest in the progress of discovery been generally diffused. And popular fiction testifies to the existence of such an interest. The type of young lady who figures in 'Pride and Prejudice' as a student of literature and moral philosophy, reappears as a student of astronomy in Disraeli's 'Sybil.' Ten years before Sybil's time ladies had congregated to hear Lyell's first professorial lectures at King's College, London, but were subsequently excluded by the governors; their attendance at Wheatstone's lectures being also prohibited by the Bishop of London.

[1] This is shown by Brougham's ignorant attack on Thomas Young in the 'Edinburgh Review.'

[2] 'Dictionary of National Biography,' Vol. XXVI., p. 264.

Astronomy and geology were the two most popular sciences. Professor Nichol of Glasgow did most to arouse interest in celestial phenomena. George Eliot, while still an Evangelical, describes herself as 'revelling in' his 'Architecture of the Heavens' (1841).[1] But geology had more the charm of new discovery, of unexpected revelations, of secrets still in reserve. Harriet Martineau tells us that in the period following the unexampled vogue of Scott's novels, 'the general middle-class public purchased five copies of an expensive work on geology to one of the most popular novels of the time.'[2] Geology had, indeed, to a far greater extent than any other science, as then studied, the interest of coming into contact with the Bible, by way of confirmation or by way of collision. Danger from astronomy seemed forgotten. Edward Young had called it the mother of devotion. Johnson had said that the stars in their courses fought against infidelity. But the new science showed less docility. Before the end of the eighteenth century palaeontological evidence was already used by freethinkers to discredit the Mosaic cosmogony; and Chateaubriand, in his defence of Christianity, was driven to the grotesque evasion of supposing that the fossils were created in the rocks.[3] I have already mentioned the obscurantist movement of 1824,[4] about which Coleridge complained to Crabb Robinson, a movement in which even Sir Humphry Davy was not ashamed to take part.[5] Apparently the reactionists found geology easier to convert than to silence. In a country where university teaching was monopolised by the clergy, the reconciliation did not prove difficult. Poetical divines could not, indeed, talk any longer about a 'rose-red city half as old as time.' Even the age of Damascus was not commensurable with the enormous periods requisite on any computation for the processes of stratification and denudation. But time could be provided *ad libitum*, either in the undefined epoch when 'the earth was without form and void,' or by stretching the creative days into ages.[6] On the other hand,

[1] 'George Eliot's Life,' Vol. I., p. 89.
[2] 'History of England,' Vol. II., p. 334.
[3] 'Génie du Christianisme,' Pt. I., chap. iv., sect. 5.
[4] *Supra*, p. 234.
[5] 'Crabb Robinson's Diary,' Vol. II., p. 273.
[6] It is perhaps as well to mention that the Hebrew word for 'day' in

geology, so far from opposing, seemed actively to support the story of a universal deluge by pointing to the former submergence of what is now dry land, and by bringing to light remains of animals found in caves, which were supposed to have perished in that catastrophe.

Nor was this the sole service to religion with which the new science was credited. There seemed good reason for believing that Noah's deluge was not the only event of its kind. From the necessary imperfection of the geological record men erroneously inferred the existence of a real discontinuity between the successive epochs of the earth's history. From time to time terrible catastrophes, as was thought, supervened, caused either by fire or by water, destroying all life on the surface of the globe, and necessitating on each occasion a fresh exercise of creative power. Here, then, was that very evidence of miraculous interference with the course of nature which Hume, as was supposed, had triumphantly challenged theologians to supply. Here were witnesses that could neither lie nor be deceived, 'sermons in stones,' preaching the existence and power of God. Whatever Macaulay might say to the contrary, natural theology *was* a progressive science. Cuvier had carried the Socratic argument from design a step further by proving that there was a time when organisms giving evidence of purpose did not exist. Aristotle was wrong when he taught that the same specific types had existed from eternity in an eternal world, being transmitted from parent to offspring without beginning or end.

Hume would not have been so easily disconcerted as his oppugners assumed. A slight shift in the wording of his famous formula would have twisted the argument from their hands. It is contrary to experience that the course of nature should be interrupted; it is not contrary to experience that men of science should be mistaken. And, even if catastrophes were established, the sceptic had a quite conceivable alternative to fall back on. In our ignorance of natural forces it was not legitimate to dogmatise about what the prolific agencies of the earth could or could not produce. In point of fact Agassiz believed that after each glacial period a new flora and fauna came into existence

Genesis, chap. i. no more means 'an age' than the word for 'made' means 'caused to be evolved,' or than the word for 'God' means 'energy.'

by spontaneous generation. It is between such an origin and gradual evolution, not between evolution and supernatural creation, that science has to choose.

Coleridge, under the guidance of Hume and Kant, had seen the weakness of the argument from design, and Newman saw it still. But English men of science, being at that time destitute of philosophical culture, kept playing variations on Paley, with great satisfaction to their multitudinous readers, and considerable profit to themselves. Lord Bridgewater, dying in 1829, had left eight thousand pounds to subsidise literature of this description; and his trustees divided the money among eight scientific writers, half of them clergymen, who each produced a treatise to the desired effect, duly supplying what a sarcastic savant called 'power, wisdom, and goodness as per order.' John Mill complained that 'writers on natural theology could not consider the greatness and wisdom of God, once for all, as proved;'[1] which was not very wonderful when they were paid to bring fresh proofs; and Macaulay observed that 'the discoveries of modern astronomers and anatomists have really added nothing to that argument which a reflecting mind finds in every beast, bird, insect, fish, leaf, flower, and shell.' But in fact the discoveries, not the argument, were the interesting thing. As Murchison wittily observed, Buckland's Bridgewater Treatise was more properly 'a bridge-over-the-water treatise.'[2] With others of the same kind, it facilitated the transition from a purely theological view to a purely scientific view of the world.

For the moment theology seemed triumphant. At a meeting of the British Association held at Bristol in 1836 Moore the poet declared that 'Science was the handmaid, or rather the torch-bearer to Religion.'[3] At Liverpool, the year after, Sedgwick told his audience that if he found his science 'interfere in any of its tenets with the representations or doctrines of Scripture he would dash it to the ground.'[4] Later again, in 1841 another clerical geologist, Conybeare, is 'delighted to find so' much religious feeling among the present race of scientific men.'[5]

[1] 'Dissertations and Discussions,' Vol. I., p. 105.
[2] Lyell's 'Life and Letters,' Vol. I., p. 473.
[3] Caroline Fox, 'Journals and Letters,' Vol. I., p. 8.
[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 41.
[5] *Op. cit.*, p. 258.

Some who were themselves without that feeling respected it in others and studiously avoided offending it. Charles Lyell, who did more than any other British geologist to revolutionise the current opinions, writing in 1827, calls 'running counter to the feelings and prejudices of the age,' 'an unfeeling disregard of the weakness of human nature;'[1] and so deeply rooted was this principle with him that long afterwards, in his work on the 'Antiquity of Man,' he abstained from giving any numerical estimate of what that antiquity might be; and only when pressed on the subject at London dinner-parties did he acknowledge that the time during which the human race had existed on this earth could not be less than fifty thousand years.[2] Richard Owen, who scoffed at the Scriptural narrative of the creation in private, even when talking to an orthodox clergyman, observed a similar reticence in his publications, censuring Darwin for his outspokenness, and posing as an opponent of Natural Selection, while making no secret of his agreement with it in conversation.[3]

Yet Lyell, at any rate, chafed under this degrading subservience to the ignorant bigotry of Protestant England, so much more narrow-minded than papal Rome,[4] and welcomed every sign of the approaching deliverance from its yoke. In his letters, better perhaps than in any other series of documents, we can trace the growth of emancipation. In 1829 he records the payment of five hundred guineas for a work 'to prove the Mosaic cosmogony, and that we (the geologists) ought all to be burned in Smithfield.'[5] Shortly afterwards he complains that 'Moses and his penal deluge' have prevented certain most significant alluvial phenomena in the Roman Campagna from being used to throw new light on the earth's recent history.[6] A better state of feeling—due perhaps to the Reform agitation—sets in with the great year 1830. 'It is,' he announces, 'just the time to strike at'[7] the Mosaic cosmogony. And strike he did, with a vengeance, though using smokeless and noiseless

[1] 'Life,' Vol. I., pp. 173–4.

[2] Bain's 'Practical Essays,' p. 275.

[3] 'Life of Fenton Hort,' Vol. I., p. 431. Afterwards in conversation with Stillman he expressed himself more positively.

[4] 'Life,' Vol. I., p. 240.

[5] P. 238. [6] P. 240. [7] P. 271.

powder, by the publication of his epoch-making 'Principles of Geology,' and inaugurating the uniformitarian theory.

According to Lyell, no deluges, or cataclysms of any kind, of greater intensity than the floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslips, and so forth, which we still experience, need be assumed to explain the history of the earth's crust through the whole of geologic time. A different distribution of land and water, or a difference of some thousands of feet in the height of particular mountain-chains, would explain the vicissitudes of climate attested by changes in the flora and fauna of the same regions during the lapse of ages. Similarly with the upheaval and depression of continents and mountain-chains: no more is necessary to produce these vast changes than such movements of the land as we now see constantly going on. The doctrine of special creations is still upheld; and so far the new argument of natural theology remains unshaken; but the process, according to Lyell, is very gradual, and may be going on still for aught we know to the contrary; there is no real evidence of those wholesale clearances and fresh peoplings of the earth's surface in which contemporary geology delighted, and which the French school long continued to uphold.

Lyell is now generally considered to have overstated his case. Uniformitarianism, as he conceived it, left out of account forces which are not now operative, or operative only to a slight degree, but which there is good reason for believing to have been formerly much more active, and to have played a great part in the formation of the earth's crust. There have been revolutions and catastrophes in the history of man's dwelling-place as in the history of man himself. And here, as elsewhere, evolution has had a beginning and will have an end—events not contemplated by the uniformitarian philosophy. But as regards the vital point of the controversy, the British geologist was right. What he really fought against was the doctrine of discontinuity, of sudden and inexplicable changes suggesting the necessity of supernatural intervention before things could resume their normal course. Without himself accepting the transformation of species,[1] he made it a more credible theory by

[1] That is to say, before Darwin. Even after Darwin Lyell felt a great repugnance to accepting the simian origin of man. In religion he seems to

removing what had once seemed the insuperable obstacles opposed to the gradual transition from one organic type to another.

If, as we are told, Lyell's opinions 'caused some alarm,'[1] the alarm seems to have subsided quickly enough. In fact the same extreme stupidity that made pietists pin their faith on the disjointed mythology falsely ascribed to a more or less problematic Hebrew legislator, also made them blind to the logical consequences of the new interpretation of nature. The author of the 'Principles of Geology' worked on unmolested, exercising little influence except on a few kindred spirits, and extending the same well-bred forbearance as before to the popular superstitions, but privately grumbling at the belief in the Mosaic deluge as 'an incubus on our science,'[2] or indulging in a quiet smile at the large sale of Buckland's Bridgewater Treatise. In the early forties he grows restive over the exclusion of science from Oxford by the Puseyites,[3] and the clerical monopoly of education everywhere.[4] Then suddenly come tidings of promised deliverance from a quarter whence it could least have been hoped—

'via prima salutis,
Quod minime reris, Graia pandetur ab urbe.'

At Oxford itself a liberal and rationalist school is springing up. And the rationalists are at no pains (like us in London) to conceal their opinions. 'In large parties men are holding forth about the religious instinct, like the Greek instinct for form, which enabled the Jews to develop Judaism and Christianity.'[5] As a consequence of this altered tone, editions of the Fathers, after having been run up to fancy prices in the previous decade, are now a drug in the market, although there is still some demand for them at Cambridge.[6] A year later, 'public opinion is rapidly strengthening, but the clerical influence arrayed against all progressive science, whether

have been a Unitarian, and the foremost Unitarians were not at first favourable to evolution.

[1] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 296.
[2] P. 328.
[3] *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 82.
[4] Pp. 84–5.
[5] P. 114 (1846).
[6] An incidental proof of Oxford's primacy in freethought at that time.

physical or literary, is too powerful to be easily overcome.'[1] Finally, in 1851, professors are publishing the most unorthodox views, for entertaining or confessing which they would have been sent to Coventry ten years before.[2] Evidently something had been done for the emancipation of science that science could not do for herself.

We have now to consider what was the cause of this sudden revolution, or rather to what convergence of influences it can be traced back; and how long the process of gestation had been progressing before the new spirit came to its birth.

Those whose philosophy consists in referring every important change to the intervention or the withdrawal of some commanding personality, will no doubt make Newman's secession from the Church of England responsible for this weakening of the faith. Unfortunately for their theory the change had begun some years before that event; and if Newman had remained true to his early convictions things would probably have run much the same course as that which they actually followed. Already in 1840 he had declared rationalism to be the great evil of the day; and his only remedy for it was that appeal to authority which was his chief reliance at all times, whether without or within the Roman fold. But authority had neutralised itself by the division of Christianity into Churches, and of the Church of England into parties. Hence ensued a deadlock out of which there was no escape but by the exercise of reason; and to reason accordingly men had recourse.

Another easy explanation is supplied by the familiar idea of a reaction. The Tractarian movement had been a reaction against Evangelicalism, and so the time was come for a rationalistic reaction against the teaching of Keble and Newman. In point of fact, however, it does not appear that people get tired of holding the same opinions; on the contrary, the difficulty is to get them to adopt new ones. Nor is it true that each succeeding generation feels bound to reverse the judgments of its predecessors. If anything the tendency is rather to develop them. In this instance the younger men went further on the same path, carrying Newman along with them, while the other early supporters of the movement remained true to their

[1] P. 127 (1847). [2] P. 172.

Anglican principles. And at the same time Arnold's pupils were pushing his conclusions to a more advanced stage of rationalism. In any case, to talk about reaction would be to restate the fact, not to explain it. The question is how those liberal tendencies which had been violently arrested ten years before were enabled to break loose and finally to triumph in the struggle for the possession of English thought.

As in the seventeenth century, English liberty triumphed through the help of foreign allies. While literature lay 'tranced in golden languors,' or tossing in feverish dreams, or playing with idle fancies, or aping outworn fashions, or consuming itself in a 'scorn that became self-scorn,' while science was being bribed or terrified into servile acquiescence with the reigning superstition, the philosophy and criticism of Scotland, Germany, and France came to awaken, to reorganise, and to rearm them for the fight. To understand how this was done we must turn aside for a brief space to glance at the great intellectual events which were happening elsewhere.

In a former chapter we followed the course of religious thought in Germany up to the dawn of the nineteenth century, breaking off at the moment when the renewed interest in religion was showing itself by numerous conversions to the Roman Catholic Church. This reactionary movement in theology went hand in hand with the great Romanticist movement in literature, which was of a far more pronouncedly mediaeval character than the contemporary current in Great Britain. For, as we have seen, the romanticism associated with the works of Sir Walter Scott simply meant interest in a life of adventure, and in the countries or historical epochs when adventurous freedom becomes more possible than in ordinary civilised society, and had absolutely nothing to do with a sentimental wish for the restoration of feudal Catholicism, or rather ran counter to its restraints. Moreover, the secular traditions of English history were such as to inculcate an implacable hostility, fully shared by Scott, to the pretensions of papal Rome, that is to the strongest bond of Catholic unity; while Germany had glorious memories associated with the Holy Roman Empire of the German people, an empire only made possible by its unification under the Catholic faith.

German romanticism first began in adhesion to the subjective philosophy of Fichte,[1] a system whose bearings on theology have been defined in the chapter already referred to. But the romantic school at the time of its full development and supremacy over German thought had broken off from this first connexion, and had become associated much more intimately with the system of Fichte's successor on the philosophical throne, with the pantheism of Schelling. What this erratic genius had in common with the romantic leaders was at one time a most exaggerated estimate of the place held by art and aesthetic culture among the things of the spirit, and at all times a predilection for short cuts to truth, a disposition to substitute strained, mostly fanciful analogies for truly scientific generalisations.[2]

Schelling counts in the history of modern philosophy, and more particularly of German philosophy, as the founder of absolutism, of the doctrine that all nature constitutes a single indivisible whole, that knowledge is not of mere appearances, but of things as they are, that subject and object, so far from being separated by an impassable chasm, are, in fact, identical. It is not necessary to trouble the reader with an account of the process by which this position was reached; indeed he will be much better able to understand what follows by agreeing to treat it as an arbitrary and not particularly intelligible assumption, a piece of romantic wilfulness flung out in the dark at the problem of speculation. For that is just how Hegel conceived it;[3] and it is with Hegel, not with Schelling, that we are interested in the present connexion.

Older and more slowly matured than his brilliant friend and fellow-student Schelling, this greatest of German systematic thinkers owed his intellectual training chiefly to the schools of Athens, his standards of art to the Attic drama, his ideals of life to the Greek city-state. He was a Hellenist like Goethe and Schiller, but his Hellenism rested more firmly than theirs on a first-hand study of the antique, and resulted in a far deeper intelligence of its meaning. His immediate master was Aristotle; but he pushed the pretensions of reason much

[1] This is well brought out in Haym's 'Romantische Schule.'
[2] See Noack's 'Schelling und die Romantik.'
[3] Preface to the 'Phänomenologie des Geistes.'

further than Aristotle, further even than Proclus or Spinoza. The universe, he tells us, is penetrable to thought; it *is* thought, is reason, has, so to speak, argued itself out into the minutest details of its actual structure. Our best wisdom is to follow the process imitatively, to rethink the great thought of creation, with the clear consciousness that in so doing we not only repeat but complete it. To conceive the outer world as existing in possible isolation, independent of ourselves, would be a false abstraction. For to *be* truly and completely is to be self-conscious, self-possessed; and that is what the universe becomes through our knowledge of it and of ourselves as one with it. The Absolute is mind (Geist), the self-thinking thought of Aristotle; but not isolated as Aristotle's God seems to be; rather the last outcome of the cosmic process, the true Infinite which has no limit because it recognises what is without it as itself, as a necessary stage in its arrival at self-consciousness. Schelling was right when he identified object and subject, the knower and the known, wrong when he spoke of their indifference. The subjective is intrinsically higher than the objective; and this truth gives us back the idea of progress, makes progress possible. Self-realisation is the end of becoming.

Schelling, for all his identification and equilibration of subject and object, did not make knowledge coextensive with Being. Idea, in his philosophy, does not go without a remainder into fact. There is a mysterious incognisable ground of things, an unaccountable spontaneous outbreak of the primordial Will. Coleridge either adopted this view or discovered it independently for himself.[1] Hegel, on the other hand, is a pure intellectualist. The mainspring of his system is neither will nor any other dynamic principle, but logical contradiction;—not, as has been ignorantly asserted, a self-contradiction calmly assumed and acquiesced in as the ultimate secret of things, but the inconsistency arising from an incomplete statement of the truth, by which thought is ever urged on to widen and deepen its view, to create a higher synthesis where contradictories are reconciled. In this he follows the

[1] He certainly had read Schelling's treatise 'Ueber die Freiheit,' as the notes printed by Sara Coleridge in the second edition of her father's 'Biographia Literaria' prove.

drift of all German speculation, but gives it, for the first time, a fully elaborated logical expression.

What has been said of Schelling may here be repeated, with a difference, of his great rival. It is not to be expected or desired, but rather the contrary, that a reader otherwise unversed in Hegel's dialectic should fancy that he understands all about it from so summary an account of its nature. The master himself would have said that his system only became intelligible through its application, through its manifested power to carry order into our scattered conceptions, ranging them in one comprehensive and luminous whole. Schelling derided this pretension to prove all things as a new scholasticism, an intolerable pedantry. But it gave Hegel a hold over German thought such as he never possessed; and however repulsive may be the master's own exposition, his followers, both in Germany and England, have, with few exceptions, been distinguished for the lucidity and even for the grace of their style.

Hegelianism only interests us through its connexion with religion; but that is just the side on which it formerly exercised the most powerful influence in Germany, and continues to exercise it in England. Hegel was himself a student of theology in youth, and seems to have been gradually led on from it to the wider fields of free scientific speculation.[1] He liked definite dogmatic statements, definiteness combined with subtlety being indeed a note of his intellect; and he also liked the theologian's assumption of incontrovertible authority. It represented, he thought, in another order, the demonstrated certainties of philosophy. But, while professing himself a good Lutheran, he did not, in truth, retain a single vestige of religious belief. While criticising the shallowness of eighteenth-century rationalism, he considered that it had done a good and necessary work. At an early age he followed Schelling in rejecting all supernaturalism, and, unlike Schelling, he never took up with it again. His philosophy explains how all forms of religion arose, and what they meant for humanity; but it is independent of them all. He calls Christianity the absolute religion; but

[1] This is well brought out in Mr. Baillie's work on the history of Hegel's Logic.

that is merely because its dogmas supply him with a figurative representation of his own pantheistic conceptions, and that only under a Protestant form. As to Catholicism, he pronounces it incompatible with any rational constitution of the State.[1]

Hegel has been reproached with want of patriotism in the first part of his career as a teacher in South Germany, and with want of political liberality in the second part as a professor at Heidelberg and Berlin. He sided with the anti-national tyranny of Napoleon, and he sided with the oppressive bureaucracy of the Restoration. There is truth in both charges; yet throughout he was the consistent, if mistaken, advocate of civilisation against barbarism, or at least what he considered to be such. For our interest it is far more important to remember that on all occasions he stood for reason as against tradition and mysticism, for the practical against the sentimental, for the classic against the romantically mediaeval spirit, for Protestantism against Catholicism, for the modern State against feudal revivals. If he exposed with merciless sarcasm the superficiality and conceit of rationalistic criticism, this was because it missed the historical meaning and justification of what the rationalists called superstition, while they substituted for it the more abstract but more senseless superstition of a God divorced from nature, his contempt for the orthodox apologists with their historical evidences of Christianity was at least equally strong.

Years before the cholera carried him off at Berlin, Hegel had been a name of power at his own old university of Tübingen, where the most ardent students read his Phenomenology together on Sundays, and came to a consciousness of the radical difference between its idealism and the orthodox Protestantism of their official teachers. Of this band the most courageous and consistent was David Strauss. With him Hegelianism returned to its theological starting-point, and to the life of Jesus as the centre of theology. That life, as we find it recorded in the Gospels, is a religious legend filled with miraculous events; and philosophy had long since declared that miracles did not happen, with a recurring tendency to insist that they could not happen. Deists held that such

[1] 'Philosophie der Geschichte,' p. 538.

events would be violations of God's own laws, and atheists held that as nothing existed outside nature, nothing could interfere with the sequence of physical cause and effect. And a Hegelian who believed that all reality was a process determined by a necessity equal to that of syllogistic reasoning, could as little admit any deviation from its eternal order.

How, then, were the Gospel miracles to be explained? By imposture or literary fiction, said the anti-Christian rationalist. But this view could not be maintained in the face of that more sympathetic interpretation of religion which the modern spirit, especially as understood by the romantic school, had introduced. Least of all could the advocates of a liberal and enlightened Christianity maintain it. Accordingly they tried to show that the so-called miracles were really natural occurrences, misinterpreted either by those who witnessed and related them, or by those who heard the relations, as interferences with the course of nature. Of this school the chief representative was Paulus, a theological professor at Heidelberg, who went through the Gospel narratives with intrepid pedantry, explaining all their marvellous incidents from the birth to the ascension of the Saviour as perfectly consistent with the known laws of causation. His view seems to have held the field when Strauss took up the subject of Gospel criticism.

A consistent Hegelian necessarily regarded miracles as impossible, both for the philosophical reason already given, and, apart from that, because he neither believed in a personal God nor in a disembodied spirit of any kind. So far Strauss agreed with the rationalists. Nor was there anything in Hegel's idealism to prevent his accepting the theory of Paulus, had it been intrinsically credible. This, however, it was not; so he looked round for another explanation, and found it in the mythic theory. His use of the word myth seems to have popularised it in literature and even in common conversation, but without the technical meaning attached to it in his great work, the 'Life of Jesus.' By a myth Strauss understands the embodiment of a general idea in an imaginative story; and the Gospel miracles in particular are, according to him, concrete representations of the Messianic idea. Before Jesus was born, a general notion had obtained wide currency respecting the mighty works destined to be performed by the Messiah in

attestation of his divine mission; and these anticipations were constructed on the model of the miraculous narratives in the Hebrew Scriptures, or of the predictions which the Deliverer was bound to fulfil. In short, the whole Messianic legend had been constructed beforehand; it only needed a sufficiently imposing personality to win the confidence of some enthusiastic followers, and the life of Christ, as we have it, would in no long time be related and believed. That personality was supplied by Jesus of Nazareth, whose historical existence the new critic never for a moment doubted.

Strauss put forward his views in a clear and elegant style, which, together with the novelty of the mythic theory and the profound scholarship displayed in his work, at once won for it a wide circulation, even among the general public, for whom it was not originally intended. But what gave the work such far-reaching efficacy was not its positive theory about the origin of the Gospel-history, never very satisfactory, and subsequently abandoned in great part by the author himself. What really interested people was the destructive criticism of the miraculous narratives, chiefly carried on by an exposure of the inconsistencies shown by the evangelists in relating the same occurrence, or of the doubt cast on some by the silence of others about what ought to have been equally known and of equal importance to all, if it had really happened. With few exceptions Strauss has no need to fall back on the *a priori* argument against miracles. Even if the Gospels told nothing but what was consistent with ordinary experience, they could hardly be accepted as historical.

There was perhaps nothing new in any single criticism offered by Strauss; but the difficulties raised by previous enquirers had never before been brought together with such comprehensive erudition or marshalled with such controversial ability—an ability all the more effective because the writer's passionate hostility to supernatural religion masks itself under the appearance of cool scientific impartiality. Yet, even with such recommendations, a work of pure negation would hardly have made its way, hardly have caught the ear of the general public, hardly even have been undertaken by the author himself. The liquid solvent had to be conveyed in a solid capsule of constructive theory if it was to be absorbed by the general body

of European thought. A somewhat similar phenomenon, as will be remembered, was witnessed in the first half of the eighteenth century, when rationalism only gained a hearing by allying itself with natural religion, and in general with the fashionable worship of nature, to which revealed religion was opposed as the invention of an interested priesthood. Apologists have been much admired for attacking the tutelary and provisional husk; but by the time they had succeeded in stripping it off, the inner core of reason had escaped, and was propagating itself under other protective integuments.

Nor was it the mythic theory alone which, as a positive principle, made the fortune of Strauss's book. His adhesion to Hegel's philosophy counted perhaps for more, at least in Germany. Hitherto Hegelianism had passed for a bulwark of established creeds and institutions, just as Coleridge's teaching passed in England, and with the further advantage of winning full official recognition from Altenstein, the Prussian Minister of Public Instruction, who silenced Hegel's opponents and packed the university with his supporters. It now appeared that, in theology at least, the authorities had been doing the work of their most dangerous enemies. And the surprise was all the more disagreeable because outside the school an orthodox reaction, made much of by Pusey in his reply to Rose, had been going on for several years, against which Strauss's 'Life of Jesus' raised a powerful though indirect protest, striking as it did at the very heart of the position with the combined momentum of the higher criticism and the higher speculation. For, while professing to replace the exploded historical basis of Christian dogma by a profounder philosophical basis, the young Hegelian is in reality offering his master's evolution of nature from pure thought, and of spirit, incarnate in man, from the outer world, as a substitute for the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement. The real secret of Hegel had been told, and could never again be hushed up. Once more, as all through the past, philosophy had issued in the negation of religious belief.

Like all the brilliant young writers who formed with him what he called the Hegelian Left, Strauss subsequently discarded, or rather let fall, the master's philosophy, content simply to put himself in line with the progressive culture and science of the age. Like the mythic theory, it had served as a

scaffolding under cover of which the work of demolition went on; nor could its removal restore the ruined edifice of faith.

No fact in the history of thought is more remarkable than the late introduction of Hegel into England. Professional students of German philosophy seem to have long remained ignorant even of his name. Coleridge, although he had looked into Hegel's 'Logic,' and perhaps took some hints from its general method,[1] never mentions his name, nor does Carlyle or De Quincey, both of whom knew something about Schelling. Pusey met Hegel at Berlin, but says nothing about him in discussing the relation of German thought to religion.[2] Sir William Hamilton, writing in 1827, refers to his 'Logic' with ignorant contempt, and never seems to have acquired a first-hand acquaintance with any of his works. Julius Hare has one quotation from the 'Philosophy of Law' and another from the 'Aesthetics' in his contributions to the 'Guesses at Truth.'

Probably most people began their studies in German literature by reading Madame de Stael,[3] who collected her materials before Hegel's star had risen above the horizon; and, owing to the general prevalence of romanticism in Europe, their attention was chiefly given to the school against which Hegel's philosophy was a standing protest. Heinrich Heine complained that in France a thoroughly false estimate of his countrymen had been produced by Madame de Stael, whose book on Germany gave them the impression that the Germans were a dreamy, sentimental, unpractical race, with strong, if rather undefined, religious beliefs. Heine had himself the advantage of some training in the school of Hegel, carrying away from it a sense of reality, and a recognition of the same sense in others, which he endeavoured, but without success, to impress on his French readers as a characteristic of the German genius. Above all, he pointed out how radically subversive of the commonly accepted theism German philosophy was, and had been since Kant.

In England the revelation of this other more formidable Germany seems to have begun with Strauss's 'Life of Jesus,'

[1] *Supra*, p. 261.
[2] Liddon's 'Life of Pusey,' Vol. I., p. 158.
[3] 'Life of F. D. Maurice,' Vol. I., p. 176.

through which Hegel also must have become more generally known. In default of ampler materials we can gather some notion of the effect produced from the correspondence of John Sterling. It may perhaps be remembered that Sterling's name stands in the list of gifted young men who were swept into the Christian ministry by that great wave of religious excitement which deluged the educated classes during the quarter century after the conclusion of the French war. Sterling has gained a curious sort of celebrity from his having been made the subject of a biographical masterpiece by Carlyle; and it remains a literary problem why he should have been deemed worthy of that honour by a critic whose judgment of much greater writers than this young journalist was scornful in the extreme. It must be remembered, however, that others besides Carlyle, and differing widely from him in character and opinions, received as deep an impression from Sterling's personality. Wordsworth, Julius Hare, and Caroline Fox were among his admirers. Mill was more attached to him than he ever was to any other man. Evidently his full powers were only shown in conversation, an art which the example of Coleridge had led the young men of that period to estimate far above its real value, and to cultivate with corresponding zeal. Much of his talent was wasted on fiction, for which he had no genuine vocation, and on poetry, for which he was still less fitted. Years were wasted before he found his way to a strong and sincere method of thinking, and when at last it seemed in sight the blind fury with the abhorred shears came to slit his thin-spun thread. But his delicate intellectual sensitiveness, combined with a moral courage rare among his contemporaries, makes Sterling a valuable index of the change through which English thought was passing when the Tractarian movement came to an end.

At Cambridge Sterling had, Carlyle thinks, 'frankly adopted the anti-superstitious side of things.' If not exactly a Benthamite, he fully shared Bentham's hostility to the Church of England.[1] He next comes under Coleridge's influence, and learns to think that 'Faith is the highest Reason;' but also reads the 'Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit' in manuscript with 'delight and sympathy,' finding the restricted view of

[1] 'Life of Sterling,' p. 36.

inspiration there set forth quite compatible with Anglican Christianity. After a variety of romantic adventures and desultory occupations, he, as I have said, is swept into the Church, as many others were, by the enthusiasm of the hour, and throws himself with ardour into parish work as Julius Hare's curate at Hurstmonceaux. Incapacitated by illness in less than a year, he plunges into theological studies, still retaining his liberal orthodoxy for a considerable period, planning 'Discourses on Revelation' and a 'Treatise on Ethics.' Schleiermacher and the Germans generally are helpful, but he cannot reconcile himself to their low opinion of the Old Testament. At the same time the more he studies it the more doubtful he becomes about 'the great physical miracles.'[1] But the continuity of Christianity with Judaism stands fast.

Like Coleridge and Newman, Sterling is chiefly impressed, though perhaps less oppressed, by the idea of sin and the consequent necessity of redemption. Milman has overlooked this (more probably did not believe in it); and two friends, one of whom is Carlyle, are painfully deficient in their appreciation of its importance. 'The defect of Mr. Dundas's theology, compounded as it is of the doctrine of the Greek Fathers, of the Mystics, and of ethical philosophers, consists, if I may hint a fault in one whose holiness, meekness, and fervour would have made him the beloved disciple of him whom Jesus loved, in an insufficient apprehension of the reality and depth of sin.' 'I find in all my conversations with Carlyle that his fundamental position is the good of evil; he is for ever quoting Goethe's epigram about the idleness of wishing to jump off one's shade. This is of course very closely connected with Pantheism, and also with the dusky glare of discontent which pervades Carlyle's whole mind.'[2]

Increasing uncertainty about the earlier portions of the Old Testament compels him to throw aside what he has written on the subject; but Christianity has lost none of its value in his eyes, and he reads Schleiermacher with increased satisfaction.[3] German religion represents the matured mind of Paul and John better than English religion.[4] Schleiermacher is on the whole

[1] Hare's 'Memoir,' prefixed to Sterling's 'Miscellaneous Writings,' p. lxi.
[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. lxxiii.–iv.
[3] P. xcv.
[4] P. xcvii.

the greatest spiritual teacher he has ever fallen in with. Thirlwall's 'Greece' and Carlyle's 'French Revolution' are the two greatest histories in the English language. Thirlwall and Carlyle make a rather ill-assorted pair; but one sees in these candid preferences of Sterling's how the Coleridgean insincerity is being burned away, partly by Hellenic rationality, partly by the revolutionary hatred of shams which it was Carlyle's office to revive as against romanticist illusions.

In the following year (1838) Sterling's Hellenism is shown still more explicitly by a rapturous panegyric on Socrates in an article on Montaigne contributed to Mill's 'London Review.' A winter at Rome probably increased the growing hatred for shams, especially those arising from religious self-delusion. Some time before he had spoken of Frank Edgeworth's return from Italy as 'a happy thing,' because he would not there have 'gained any intuition into the reality of Being, as different from a mere power of speculating and perceiving.' This seems rather hard on the country of Rosmini; but Sterling must have come to see that if some realities were concealed by the ritualism and imposture of Italian priestcraft, other realities revealed themselves through the beauty of Italian art and Italian scenery. Amid these surroundings he learned, apparently for the first time, to appreciate the full greatness of Goethe, whom he used to vilify; and this discovery again brought him nearer to Carlyle, of whom we have an enthusiastic but discriminating criticism from Sterling's pen written at Clifton in the decisive summer of 1839.

Decisive I call it, for it was there that he read Strauss's 'Life of Jesus' in German. With how much agreement our authorities do not state, but evidently with the keenest zest. 'Exceedingly clever and clear-headed,' he calls it in a letter to Carlyle, 'and less of destructive rage than I expected. It will work deep and far in such a time as the present. When so many minds are distracted about the history or rather genesis of the Gospels, it is a great thing for partisans on the one side to have, what the other have never wanted, a Book of which they can say, this is my Creed and Code—or rather Anti-Creed and Anti-Code. And Strauss seems perfectly secure against the sort of answer to which Voltaire's critical and historical shallowness perpetually exposed him. . . . It seems admitted

that the orthodox theologians have failed to give any sufficient answer.'[1]

Writing to Julius Hare, who watched with horror his young friend's growing perversion, Sterling very justly dwells on Strauss's recognition of the close connexion between the Old Testament and the Gospel, a recognition quite wanting to Schleiermacher's theology. But what had once buoyed up the Old Testament now dragged down the New. As a graver symptom still, Hare tells us that Strauss's Hegelian philosophy, which would have been repulsive to most English readers, was an attraction to Sterling. Not that he ever studied Hegel; but his early intercourse with Coleridge had prepared him to assimilate just that summary of the Hegelian philosophy of religion which is given at the close of the 'Life of Jesus.' Already in the essay on Carlyle he mentions 'those wondrous philosophers from Kant to Hegel'—a series now familiar but then quite novel. And he now assures Hare, quite in the Hegelian spirit, that the destruction of the Gospel history as an evidence of Christianity 'leaves the ideas of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the offices of the Spirit precisely where they were.'[2] But he does not seem to have worked out this vein of thought any further; and his letters soon cease to show any personal interest in the Church. His sympathies are with the leaders of the humanist movement, Mill, Carlyle, and Francis Newman. 'What we are going *to*,' he is quoted as saying, 'is abundantly obscure; but what we are going *from* is very plain.'[3]

It is worth noting that in these last years Sterling took up geology as a study, but apparently without the least idea of a conflict between science and theology. Deliverance or perdition —by whichever name we are to call the final parting with faith—came not from science, but from literature and philosophy.

In Sterling's life the new method of make-believe in religion, the deliberately insolent identification of faith with conscientiousness, had been tested on its chosen ground and had signally failed. Coleridge's answer to the question, how can Christianity be proved? had been 'TRY IT. It has been eighteen hundred

[1] Carlyle's 'Life of Sterling,' pp. 187–8.
[2] 'Memoir,' cxxxix. [3] Carlyle, p. 222.

years in existence: and has one individual left a record like the following: "I tried it and it did not answer. I made the experiment faithfully according to the directions; and the result has been a conviction of my credulity"? Have you in your own experience met with any one, in whose words you could place full confidence, and who has seriously affirmed: "I have given Christianity a fair trial. I was aware that its promises were made only conditionally. But my heart bears me witness that I have to the utmost of my power complied with these conditions. Both outwardly and in the discipline of my inward acts and affections I have performed the duties which it enjoins, and I have used the means which it prescribes. Yet my assurance of its truth has received no increase. Its promises have not been fulfilled, and I repent of my delusion"?'[1]

The very instance so carefully specified had been found, and found among Coleridge's own disciples. Nor did it tell against Coleridge alone. Newman had asked those wretched persons who trusted their own sight and reason more than the words of God's Ministers, why, if they trusted their senses and their reason, they did not trust their conscience too. And he answers for them: 'It is because they love sin. But if we obey God's voice in our hearts we shall have no doubt practically formidable about the truth of Scripture. Find out the man who strictly obeys the law within him and yet is an unbeliever as regards the Bible, and then it will be time enough to consider all that variety of proof by which the truth of the Bible is confirmed to us.'[2] It was time to produce these proofs, for the hour and the man had come.

Sterling had more than fulfilled Coleridge's and Newman's conditions; for he had been a hard-working curate until his health broke down under the strain. And his friend Julius Hare had some inkling of the moral to be drawn as to the value of the parochial argument. But he is ready with the usual answer of all who vend or recommend quack remedies. The dose was not large enough. If Sterling had stayed on at Hurstmonceaux, he would have successfully resisted the infection of German criticism. Perhaps he would not have had time to read it. At any rate, what Hare says seems equivalent

[1] 'Aids to Reflection,' pp. 155–6.

[2] 'Parochial and Plain Sermons,' Vol. I., p. 201.

to an admission that the scholar as such is very likely to become an unbeliever, that the pursuit of truth for its own sake is fatal to faith. Indeed, he seems to go the length of implying that the cultivation of knowledge as speculation, and without a view to its practical value, is fatal even to knowledge itself. In illustration he refers to the Greek Sophists—a singularly unfortunate example, for it was just by their subordination of theory to practice that the Sophists were distinguished from the philosophers. And with equal infelicity he quotes the Schoolmen, who subordinated reason to faith, and valued faith as a means to salvation.

At a later period of this history we shall have to study the career of a higher and more ardent spirit even than Sterling's—the great historian, J. R. Green; and we shall see how in his case parish work, carried on not for months, but for years, resulted in an incredulity still more complete. *Porro unum necessarium.* Obedience to conscience and the performance of everyday duties are not enough to secure an unquestioning faith. Love of truth and sincerity have to be flung away as they were flung away by Coleridge, who, as Sterling told Caroline Fox, 'professed doctrines he did not believe in order to avoid the trouble of controversy.'[1]

Ethical ophelism is indeed a most inconvenient ally to irrational beliefs. A high standard of duty is apt to bring some regard for veracity in its train; and veracity discountenances the uncritical acceptance of certain propositions, when certain other propositions, resting on no worse evidence, are held to be legitimate subjects for examination. Thus the very movement which drew so many young men of high character and ability into the Church ultimately subjected her pretensions to an even severer scrutiny from within than from without.

Pietism among the higher and more educated classes in England—and among the pietists I include such types as Newman and Keble, Arnold and Hare, no less than William Wilberforce and Hannah More—pietism draws its strength and sustenance from the Puritan English middle class, Low Church or Evangelical Nonconformist. Through the eighteenth century this class had been rising into ever greater importance. Since

[1] Caroline Fox, 'Journals and Letters,' Vol. I., pp. 287-8.

the Reform Act of 1832 it had become, if not exactly supreme in the State, for that without education it could not be, at any rate the ultimate arbiter in all disputed questions, as well as the source of a vague but massive public opinion, continually exercising pressure on the legislature and the administration through the newspapers; and in no long time the repeal of the Corn Laws was to increase still further its power and prestige. Intellectually this class does not rank high; but it has strict notions of duty; and a larger proportion of its members can think and act for themselves than are to be found, at the same grade of culture, in any other European country. Thus it happened that while English scholars were slowly assimilating and reconciling themselves to the conclusions of German criticism, but were restrained by the terror of middle-class bigotry from making known their altered opinions, certain members of that very class, brought up in the strictest sect of Evangelicalism, were working out the same conclusions independently and by a much more summary process—with the determination also, when their convictions were settled, not to keep them concealed.

The first of whom we have a distinct record is Charles Bray, a Coventry ribbon-maker, now chiefly remembered from his association with the youth of George Eliot. Born in 1811, and placed, after a very imperfect education, in a London warehouse at seventeen,[1] he began by interesting himself in 'the opinions of the Greek philosophers,'[2] but was soon 'converted' or 'convinced of sin' by a Dissenting Evangelical doctor.[3] Returning to Coventry, young Bray meets an interesting Unitarian minister, tries to convince him of his errors, but finds the arguments against Trinitarianism unanswerable, goes on to question the story of the Fall, gives up freewill, and finally adopts phrenology, at that time in great vogue, as the most satisfactory of philosophies.[4] Marrying in 1836, he proceeds to convert his bride to freethought, and provides a few works of the French materialistic school for her to read on the wedding-tour, but at first 'only succeeds in making her exceedingly uncomfortable.'[5] Whatever else may be doubtful, young Mrs. Bray still believes devoutly in her brother, Charles

[1] 'Autobiography of Charles Bray,' p. 6.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 7.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Pp. 10 *sqq.*
[5] P. 48.

Hennell, and refers to him for a conclusive answer, so far at least as the Bible is concerned. Charles, an orthodox Unitarian, has been through it all, and refuses to reconsider the question, but is finally induced by Bray's philosophical arguments to go over the ground once more. This renewed examination results in a complete rejection of the supernatural on Hennell's part, and furnishes the materials for an 'Inquiry concerning the Origin of Christianity,' which caused a considerable sensation at Coventry and elsewhere.[1] Marian Evans's Evangelicalism, already undermined by Scott's novels, came down with a rush on reading it, leaving the way open for Strauss and Comte to enter in and take possession of her capacious intellect.[2]

Hennell's book passed through more than one English edition, but had otherwise no great success or influence on religious thought in this country. However, it received the honour of a German translation, with a highly eulogistic preface from the pen of Strauss. What most impressed the great German critic was the practical sagacity of the English writer. 'An Englishman, a merchant, a man of the world, he possesses both by nature and by training the practical insight, the sure tact, which lays hold on realities. The solution of problems over which a German flutters with many circuits of learned formulae, our English author often succeeds in seizing at one spring. To the learned he often presents things under a surprisingly new aspect; to the unlearned invariably under that which is most comprehensible and attractive.'[3]

Hennell, in short, bears somewhat the same relation to Strauss himself that Beaufort bears to Niebuhr. Without being much of a scholar, he sees what things are incredible, and he shows why they are incredible. Like Beaufort also, he exercised little or no effect on public opinion. Strauss noted the fact with surprise, and augured ill from it for the success of his own book in England. 'They would not listen,' he complains, 'to an Englishman addressing them in their own fashion, so how can they be expected to attend to a German?'[4] He did not know that on these questions our countrymen are not much

[1] P. 49.
[2] 'George Eliot's Life,' Vol. I., p. 102.
[3] Quoted in 'George Eliot's Life,' Vol. I., p. 102.
[4] Preface to the English translation of his 'Life of Jesus.'

impressed by what is called good plain sense. They demand, even more than the Germans, an immense display of learning, relevant or otherwise, a scaffolding of ambitious theories destined to speedy decay, a studied insolence in the treatment of opponents,—

'Right arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat.'

If possible also a school, a chorus of voices, like what the Tractarians had raised. A collection of some half-dozen mediocre essays by as many different authors counts for many times more than one strong single-handed work.

Read in the light of modern criticism, Hennell chiefly impresses one by his extraordinary conservatism. An early date—between the years A.D. 68 and 70—is given to Matthew.[1] Mark wrote a little later, but is admitted to have been a disciple of Peter.[2] The third Gospel and the Acts are by Luke or Silas, a companion of Paul.[3] The greater part of the Fourth Gospel is admitted to have been written by the Apostle John about the year 97.[4] It seems important to notice this attitude of Hennell's on account of a misconception widely prevalent at the present day. Apologists are apt to assume that the credibility of the Gospels in their entirety would be saved if their traditional authorship by the men whose names they bear were established or not denied. And it is also assumed that the scholars who assign them to other authors and to a comparatively late date are actuated solely by a controversial interest. Their whole animus is thought to be directed against the miraculous element in Scripture; and as the evidence for miracles, and more particularly for the resurrection of Jesus, would be overwhelming were the First and Fourth Gospels to be accepted as the reports of eye-witnesses, every effort is made to invalidate such inconvenient attestations. And that is why the Higher Criticism has been called into existence. Its object is, by hook or by crook, to get rid of inconvenient facts. Study the Gospels like any other documents, and these artificial hypotheses will disappear.

If any such illusions still exist, the merest glance at Hennell's 'Inquiry,' or at any leading work of the older

[1] 'Inquiry,' p. 71.
[2] P. 83.
[3] P. 93.
[4] P. 108.

rationalistic literature, should suffice to dispel them. No doubt rationalism has been greatly strengthened by the progress of historical science, and its conclusions have gained a much wider acceptance through the disauthentication of various documents formerly accepted as the reports of credible eye-witnesses. But rationalism did not need that more advanced science to come into existence; nor would it cease to exist and flourish were those negative conclusions to be reversed. Similarly, the Higher Criticism is not a creation of the rationalists, nor has it been cultivated in the interests of rationalism. It has indeed tended to weaken the evidence for miracles. But this is just what might have been expected on the theory that miracles do not happen. It simply means that the nearer we get to the facts the less inconsistent with experience do they appear.

Besides the straightforward good sense of the English middle class, another characteristic closely allied with it deserves attention, namely their admirable sincerity. In both respects they offer a pleasing contrast to the superior persons from the universities, who, no doubt, would have looked down on them and their efforts after truth with immeasurable contempt. To pass from Coleridge and his disciples, or from Newman and his followers, to the Coventry group is to exchange a stifling hothouse for the open air. Charles Hennell is described by George Eliot as 'a model of moral excellence;'[1] and assuredly one sign of that excellence is to be found in the patient candour with which, to satisfy his sister's doubts, he went once more through the evidence for the truth of the Gospel history. No doubt there was a ludicrous side to Charles Bray's eager proselytism, especially as displayed on his wedding-tour; but it is less absurd than Keble's habitual reference to the ladies of his family as infallible authorities in religion;[2] and it contrasts favourably with the principle of economy as practised either at Highgate or at Oxford. Again, the conduct of Mrs. Bray[3] and of Marian Evans[4] in refusing to go to church when they had

[1] Bray's 'Autobiography,' p. 76.
[2] Kegan Paul's 'Biographical Sketches,' pp. 62–3.
[3] Bray's 'Autobiography,' p. 49.
[4] 'George Eliot's Life,' Vol. I., p. 104.

ceased to believe in Christianity seems to indicate a higher moral standard than Coleridge's professed adhesion to the Anglican system which his philosophy was destroying, or the pitiful sophistry by which Newman and Ward justified the retention of their position as ministers in a Protestant establishment while accepting the whole cycle of Roman doctrine. Even Dr. Arnold shows badly by comparison with his Warwickshire neighbours, when we find him at this very same period using his whole influence to make a young friend take orders under a pledge to repeat as true what they both believed to be false.[1] Arnold's lessons were not forgotten by his biographer; and their pernicious effect showed itself long afterwards when Stanley publicly rebuked Rowland Williams for letting the English laity know, what he himself knew to be a fact, that the Book of Daniel is a Maccabaean forgery.[2]

In view of possible misconceptions it may be desirable to explain more precisely what this contrast implies. General experience does not seem to prove that the commercial classes in England, or elsewhere, are more sincere and straightforward in formulating their convictions than the leisured and the learned classes, or that women have more moral courage than men. My own observations, so far as they go, rather incline me to the contrary opinion. But there seems good reason for thinking that on questions of religious belief the usual relations are reversed, and that heresies of every shade are proclaimed with more candour by a freethinking man of business, or by a woman in any class, than by those whose social standing or whose manhood should impose on them in honour a noble fearlessness in the confession of their creed. The solution of this paradox seems to be that the more liberally as compared with the less liberally educated classes, and men as compared with women, feel a greater responsibility for professions of unbelief just because they have been brought up to look on religious beliefs rather as safeguards to public virtue than as true in themselves; while, over and above this tender consideration for the welfare of others, they are in a state of vague terror as to

[1] Stanley's 'Life of Arnold,' Vol. II., p. 107; compare p. 151.

[2] In his article on 'Essays and Reviews' in the 'Edinburgh Review' for April, 1861.

what may happen to themselves personally if the superstitions of those more ignorant and irritable people are offended, especially were such feelings to be roused against them by their rivals in the favour of the ladies or of the populace. In Scotland religious dissimulation is perhaps more habitually sustained by the latter and more degraded motive: while in England that spirit of conciliation and regard for other people's susceptibilities, to which I have already drawn attention, brings about the same result.

Now, it is obvious that the classes to whom religion has been taught as true rather than as useful, when they come to think of it in part or whole as not true, will be withheld from continuing publicly to profess it as true by the ordinary motives which make for veracity. Or again, they may have a more or less unconscious sense of being, as those for whose sake it exists, the true seat of authority in religion, and therefore able to decree the revision or the abolition of its dogmas with more finality than any Council of the Church, being the rock—or the sand—on which it rests. They know at first hand, by direct introspection, how much or how little supernatural sanctions of morality may be worth. Mrs. Grundy herself is perhaps not the likeliest person to be affected by dread of public opinion.

Another noteworthy circumstance in this intellectual history of Coventry is the action of Unitarianism as a rationalistic ferment. Doubts were first roused in Charles Bray's mind by his controversy with a Unitarian minister; and Hennell, who had been bred a Unitarian, was more open to Bray's arguments than a Churchman at that time would have been. We shall see afterwards how powerfully Frederick Maurice's early Unitarian training operated in suggesting a new interpretation of the orthodox formularies, which has since been accepted in its essentials by the liberal High Church school. And in the second half of the nineteenth century, advanced Biblical criticism has been very largely introduced into England from the Continent by Unitarian divines.

Two years after the publication of Hennell's 'Inquiry' another work appeared, covering the same ground and pointing in the same direction. The author, an English Churchman, far exceeded Hennell in genius and learning, but was greatly

inferior to him in boldness, and perhaps in candour. If so, his weakness carried its own penalty with it, for the work to which long years of labour had been devoted was generally ignored by the clergy, produced no appreciable effect on English thought, and, although since reprinted, is now completely forgotten even by his warmest admirers. I refer to Milman's 'History of Christianity,' of which the first edition was published in 1840.

When we last met Milman, it was as the author of a 'History of the Jews,' which, it will be remembered, caused considerable scandal by introducing a certain tone of romanticism into religious literature, and what was more, religious literature intended for family reading. Since then liberal tendencies within the Church could do no more than hold their own against the obscurantist reaction known as Tractarianism. Fortunately, however, the English Government, whether carried on by Whigs or Tories, continued steadily anti-clerical, at least to the extent of regarding high ecclesiastical pretensions with dislike and suspicion. Lord Melbourne appointed Hampden to the Regius Professorship of Divinity at Oxford, notwithstanding the furious protests of Newman and his associates. Lord John Russell promoted him to the See of Hereford. Melbourne also considered Thirlwall quite orthodox enough for the episcopal bench. Milman was made Canon of Westminster and Rector of St. Margaret's by Sir Robert Peel in 1835, and Dean of St. Paul's by Lord John Russell in 1849.

Of the three large volumes composing the 'History of Christianity,' the first is almost entirely filled with a life of Christ, preceded by an account of the antecedents of his religion and of the environment in which it arose. Without committing himself to any distinct theory, Milman practically treats the Gospels as human compositions, and Christianity itself, very much in the semi-rationalistic style of the eighteenth century, as a purely ethical religion with supernatural sanctions. This part seems to have been written before the appearance of Strauss's book; but the mythical theory is controverted in an appendix. Miracles are upheld, but rather feebly; and one is left doubtful as to whether the writer really believes in what he seems half ashamed to defend. Everything is done to put Christianity in line with the world's other great religions, and to exhibit it, quite in Hennell's style, as the spontaneous outgrowth of human

thought. Nevertheless, we are assured at the last moment that it must have been supernaturally revealed. Then it is suggested, in accordance with that very theory of accommodation so violently denounced by Rose in his attack on German rationalism, that the belief in miracles has been very serviceable to religion in the ages of ignorance, and therefore may have formed part of the providential order, even if the miracles themselves did not happen. But Christ's resurrection is expressly reserved. It really did happen, and was not a mere accommodation. The more illogical the compromise, the clearer evidence does it supply of an increasing pressure exercised by German on English thought.

Neither Evangelicals nor Tractarians were disposed to make their peace with rationalism on such terms. A writer on the Protestant side 'cautioned his readers against this most dangerous and insidious work.'[1] Newman wrote in private about it as a sort of earnest of the approaching battle between orthodoxy and infidelity. Publicly he dissected out its tendencies in a review contributed to the 'British Critic,' which for delicate urbanity and razor-like irony stands perhaps at the head of all his shorter essays.

Newman held what may be called a double-aspect view of history. All events are, like the sacraments, outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace. They have one value as phenomena, as links in the chain of natural causation, and quite another value as means for the accomplishment of a divine purpose. This, of course, is pure mysticism, and is duly acknowledged as such. Rationalism rejects it, and refuses to go beyond that about which alone agreement is possible—the fixed relations of things to one another. In the present instance, however, the principle concerns us less than its application. Newman employs it to nullify the theory of evolution as a method for eliminating the supernatural element in religion. Whatever first suggested that theory, for modern thought it began with the sciences of human nature, and worked its way down to purely material phenomena. German philosophy in particular had employed the idea of development on a great scale for the interpretation of man's spiritual history; and Milman, bred as he was in the romanticist school, had

[1] J. H. Newman's 'Essays, Critical and Historical,' Vol. II., p. 247.

followed in the steps of his German masters. On the other hand, Newman, with his mystical view, regards the evolutionary method as purely superficial, as accounting only for the external side, while leaving the inner meaning untouched. It is, he observes, as if a naturalist were to account for man as a whole by showing that physically he was descended from a brute. We must not ascribe this parallel to any remarkable prescience on Newman's part. For, not to mention Lamarck, the animal descent of man was an idea of Greek philosophy; and it is mentioned here as akin to an old Gnostic speculation quoted by Milman.[1] The illustration is used to show that rationalism gains nothing by tracing back this or that Christian dogma or practice to a heathen original, for such dogmas or practices acquire an altogether new meaning by their incorporation with the Catholic system as a whole. 'The doctrine of a Trinity is found both in the East and in the West; so is the ceremony of washing; so is the rite of sacrifice. The doctrine of the Divine Word is Platonic;[2] the doctrine of the Incarnation is Indian; of a divine kingdom is Judaic; of Angels and demons is Magian; the connexion of sin with the body is Gnostic; celibacy is known to Bonze and Talapoin; a sacerdotal order is Egyptian; the idea of a new birth is Chinese and Eleusinian; belief in sacramental virtue is Pythagorean; and honours to the dead are a polytheism.'[3] Milman is represented as arguing from all this—although he certainly never says so—'These things are in heathenism, therefore they are not Christian;' while his critic prefers to say, 'These things are in Christianity, therefore they are not heathen.'[4] And he proceeds to treat them as fragments of a primaeval revelation, seeds of truth scattered far and wide, which have grown up wild, but with real life in them. Thus the Church had a perfect right to go about collecting ideas from all quarters. 'She sits in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions, claiming to herself what they said rightly, correcting their errors, supplying their defects, completing their beginnings, expanding their surmises, and thus gradually by means of

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 193.

[2] This, I may observe, is an error, shared by Newman with many other theologians. The Logos is a Heracleitean and Stoic, not in the least a Platonic idea.

[3] Newman, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

[4] *Ibid.*

them enlarging the range and refining the sense of her own teaching.'[1]

Various interesting reflexions are suggested by the foregoing passage. In the first place Newman seems, within the compass of a few pages, to have vitally transformed the mystical theory with which he started. He admits that there is more than a merely superficial resemblance between Christian and heathen ideas. There is a parallel between the inner meaning and the outward appearance. Returning to the physiological illustration, not only is man's body derived from an undeveloped animal organism, but his reason is also derived from an undeveloped animal intelligence. Again there is a striking resemblance between this conciliatory method of Newman's in theology and the methods employed by two eminent contemporaries of his in philosophy and politics. I refer to the eclectic method of Victor Cousin, which professed to find good in every system, and to the parliamentary tactics of Sir Robert Peel, which consisted largely in carrying as a Minister the measures he had gained office by opposing. Cousin's flimsy synthesis soon went to pieces; Peel broke up his party twice over, and bequeathed the fatal habit of conservation by surrender to his successors. Newman charges Milman with speculations of such a kind that 'if we indulge them Christianity will melt away like snow in our hands; we shall be unbelievers before we at all suspect where we are.'[2] But is not this very like what is happening to Catholicism before our eyes under the hands of Newman's disciples: is it not 'melting away like snow'? By an ultimate irony of evolution the search for inward significance seems likely to leave nothing substantial or enduring but external continuity of form. The cathedral will become a more gorgeous freemasons' lodge for the celebration of mysteries which will have sunk into signs of recognition between adepts. The new Rome, like the old, will tolerate and embrace all religions; but, reversing the system of pagan assimilation, they will be to the vulgar equally false, to the philosopher equally true, and to the magistrate equally useless.

Newman was neither a philosophic theorist nor an accurate reasoner; but he retained a certain hold on reality; and the

[1] P. 232.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 242.

levity with which the distinction between fact and fiction has been treated by his followers would have filled him with dismay. Still he must be charged with having set them an example of reckless playing with fire. His review of Milman raises more difficulties than it settles, and indeed leaves the rationalistic argument from history practically unanswered. If Catholic theology as a whole was revealed to primitive man, why was so much of it lost by the chosen people, the race among whom revelation remained continuous, and a select class—or whatever Newman means by 'the Church' before there were any Apostles—existed for the guardianship of sacred tradition? If immortality became known to the Persians, not by primitive tradition but by special revelation, why was that revelation withheld from the Jews? And why was not the secret of monotheism communicated a little more liberally to those whom some capricious inspiration had favoured with a knowledge of the more mysterious Trinity? Such questions might be multiplied indefinitely; and they are more easily asked than answered in an orthodox sense.

A process of doctrinal evolution conducted by the Church is an illogical compromise between miracle and law, betraying the influence of a rationalistic environment on traditionalist methods. When so much has been surrendered to natural causes, they are certain to devour the Church herself at last; the more so that a corporate personality, possessing every attribute of intelligence except its liability to error, is itself the least credible of dogmas, and the most obviously derived from an abuse of words. It is, besides, dangerously suggestive of the completer view according to which no partial group of beings but the world as a whole possesses an organising intelligence which first reaches personality and the consciousness of its own absoluteness in the individual man. Thus, but thus alone, might the judgments of the *orbis terrarum* claim to be really fearless and final. Oxford was well prepared to find in the writings of Hegel, or of Comte, her true Tracts for the Times.

Rationalists also may find matter for profitable meditation in this suggestive essay of Newman's. At the very beginning of this work occasion was taken to point out that the famous historical argument is a less potent instrument for the destruction of erroneous beliefs than seems to be imagined at the

present day. Some readers may be surprised to find that its bearings were discussed sixty-five years ago, with less knowledge indeed than controversialists now possess, but with sufficient knowledge to justify a provisional conclusion. To show the origin of a belief is, as Newman observes, not enough to prove it false. At the same time he sees clearly enough wherein the real force of the historical method consists. It raises a question, he says, as to the *authority* of Revealed Religion. And to that question there is no answer provided. It is dismissed with a sneer. 'There is nothing very profound,' Newman remarks, about the objection that originality is necessary, if not for truth of doctrine, at least for evidence of divinity; and he 'merely mentions it that he may not seem to have forgotten it.'[1] Yet opinions freely borrowed and repeated without an acknowledgment of their source seem to require some stronger attestation of a divine origin than the mere word of the dogmatist, however dictatorial, or blustering, or contemptuous his utterances may be. Newman, like his Evangelical teachers, falls back in the last resort on the sense of sin and the evidence of miracles. We shall see hereafter how these two pillars of the faith were being undermined.

But before pursuing the course of rationalism as a gradual growth among the higher classes, I must turn aside to relate an episode symptomatic of the more violent spirit of revolt aroused by the pietistic reaction among a group of reformers, sprung from the working classes, in whom the theological radicalism of the later eighteenth century had allied itself with the political radicalism of the new age.

In his preface to the German translation of Hennell's 'Inquiry' Strauss had justly praised its earnest and dignified tone as compared with the 'ridicule and scorn' practised by 'his countrymen of the deistical school.' No doubt such a tone came naturally to the excellent young man; but it had the incidental advantage of saving him from a prosecution for blasphemy. There was much less freedom of speech permitted during the religious revival than when Woolston and Chubb wrote. Under the Liverpool administration Richard Carlile, the publisher, suffered years of imprisonment, besides heavy

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 246.

fines, for selling the theological works of Thomas Paine. It is true that freethought had become associated with what respectable people called sedition, and that this was largely responsible for the new outbreak of persecution. But the governing classes could never have obtained power to deal such blows at the expression — even the intemperate expression — of religious opinion had they not been supported by a great and increasing amount of religious bigotry, even among political Liberals. James Mill never wrote against religion; yet Dr. Arnold, as we have seen, would gladly have sent him to Botany Bay. And this persecuting spirit follows very naturally from the notion that unbelief is the result of moral depravity, whether, as with Newman and Keble, it takes the extreme form of calling men wicked who question the infallibility of the Bible, or, as with Arnold, the attenuated form of calling disbelief in a personal God, 'the renunciation of obedience to God, of the sense of responsibility to him, which never can be without something of an evil heart rebelling against a yoke which it does not like to bear';[1] or of saying that 'he who has rejected God must be morally faulty, and therefore justly liable to punishment.'[2]

Arnold's words received a practical application, ten years after they were written, in certain prosecutions for blasphemy at Gloucester Assizes in August, 1842, followed by severe sentences on the parties indicted. One of the victims, Mr. G. J. Holyoake, has but recently ended an honourable career, dying universally respected for his lifelong efforts to improve the condition of the working-classes by schemes of practical philanthropy. Born at Birmingham in 1817, Mr. Holyoake received a religious education, was interested at an early age in foreign missions, taught at a Sunday-school, and wrote some pious verses which were inserted in the 'Baptist Tract Magazine.' At a time when his family were in great distress, and his little sister lay on her death-bed, an Easter-due was levied on them with merciless severity by the Rector of St. Martin's, a proceeding which raised some doubts in the boy's mind as to the utility of Church establishments.[3] But his speculative impulses seem never to have been very strong, and were easily satisfied by George Combe's phrenological system. Under the influence

[1] Stanley's 'Life of Arnold,' Vol. I., p. 259.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 260.

[3] 'Trial for Atheism,' p. 18.

of Robert Owen he became what was then called a Socialist. Owen and his disciples attacked religion, like the Benthamites, rather as an obstacle to social reform than on theoretical grounds. They published a magazine called the 'Oracle of Reason,' edited by one Southwell, 'youngest of thirty-six children,' who printed atheistic articles, and suffered fifteen months' imprisonment at Bristol in consequence. Holyoake was exasperated by this treatment of his friend, and as a result was led to adopt the same opinions. He had not long to wait for an opportunity to proclaim them. After delivering a lecture on Home Colonisation at Cheltenham, he was called to account by a local preacher for having left God out of his scheme. The challenge drew from him a declaration of disbelief in God's existence, and of abhorrence for religion as poisoning the fountain of morality. In the present state of distress the people were too poor to have a God; and as a measure of economy the lecturer would 'put the Deity on half-pay'; meaning that he would devote half the revenues of the Church to secular purposes.

For using these words Holyoake was prosecuted on a charge of blasphemy under the Common Law at Gloucester Assizes. He defended himself at great length on the ground that there are no valid arguments for the existence of a God; that it is impossible to blaspheme against what one does not believe in; that to talk about putting the deity on half-pay was a harmless way of expressing an opinion in itself perfectly lawful to hold; and that religious persecution ought to be discontinued. In this connexion the impunity granted to Strauss in Germany was mentioned as an example worthy of imitation.

Nearly the whole of these arguments were brushed aside by the judge as irrelevant. While maintaining that morality was impossible without belief in a God, he seemed to admit that anti-religious arguments and opinions were not fit subjects for prosecution, unless they were accompanied by indecent expressions calculated to excite contempt for religion among the people. The defendant had declared that he had no intention of bringing religion into contempt. But if so, he ought to have made use of other language. Such a charge left the jury no option but to return a verdict of guilty; and Holyoake was condemned to six months' imprisonment in Gloucester gaol.

It would appear that the distinction drawn by Judge Erskine between irreligious opinions themselves and the way in which they are expressed has no solid foundation in law or logic. Neither the Common Law nor the Statute Law makes any difference between decent and indecent attacks on Christianity. To deny the existence of God is not less blasphemous than to associate his name with ridiculous ideas, and leads much more surely to that abandonment of public worship which it is the object of government to prevent. In Holyoake's case the judge gave as a reason for making a difference between the two kinds of attack that 'you may answer sober arguments, but indecent reviling you cannot, and therefore the law steps in and punishes it.'[1] The assumption is not true; for indecent reviling can be answered by pointing out its indecency; and this is generally found to be the most effective kind of retort. But admitting its validity, the principle would prove too much, for then it ought to be applied impartially in every case, or at any rate in every case of religious controversy, which notoriously is not done, indecent attacks on the doctrines and discipline of the Roman Catholic Church not being punishable by law, although to a large proportion of British subjects they are as offensive as expressions about putting the deity on half-pay could be to any one at Cheltenham. That the law should interfere on behalf of one religion only shows its animus, or the animus of its administrators, shows the intention of putting down criticism on certain opinions which the governing classes consider true and useful, or rather too useful to admit the possibility of their being untrue.

Mr. Holyoake's arrest and preventive imprisonment were accompanied by circumstances of such lawless brutality that his case was brought before Parliament by Roebuck, and the Home Secretary, Sir James Graham, interfered to protect him against the local authorities. Otherwise no public attention was drawn to the case, nor is it mentioned in any modern history of England. Yet opinions about theism practically identical with those professed at the Cheltenham meeting were shortly to find their way into the highest circles of Oxford culture. It is true that they were introduced in a much

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 66.

more circuitous fashion as incidental accompaniments or consequences of new philosophical systems, and so far gave less offence; while at the same time they were more akin to the transitional genius of the age. Owen and his disciples represented a direct tradition from the eighteenth century and the Revolution. Their less outspoken contemporaries stood rather for a compromise between the religious restoration of the new era, and what we call its romanticism, on the one hand, and the complete negations of Hume and the Encyclopaedists on the other. I have shown how this compromise embodied itself in Hegel's philosophy, and how that philosophy suddenly became known to Englishmen through Strauss's 'Life of Jesus.' But at the moment of Hegel's death another philosopher of more radical tendencies in politics, and more openly, if not more essentially, hostile to all theology, was preparing to take his place on the intellectual throne.

This was Auguste Comte, by general consent the greatest of French thinkers since Descartes, and in the judgment of some, of whom the present writer is one, superior even to Descartes. I propose to give some account of the system to which he owes so high a rank, and to define the influence which it exercised on the course of English rationalism. But the subject is of such great importance that it must be reserved for a separate chapter.

CHAPTER X

COMTE, CARLYLE, AND MILL

Auguste Comte called his great work a 'System of Positive Philosophy'; and it is through an analysis of the terms 'positive' and 'positivism' that we can most readily gain access to its full significance.

What in England we call a positive man is a man very sure of his opinions, and given to expressing them in a trenchant, dogmatic way; rather prone to contradict others, and rather intolerant of contradiction for himself. In that sense the epithet would be not inaptly applied to the founder of Positivism himself; but, seeing that as much might be said of nearly all the systematic thinkers that have ever lived, it will not help us to differentiate his philosophy from theirs. It is, however, not from the English but from the French usage of this adjective that most light may be obtained.

He whom our neighbours call *un homme positif*, though possibly quite as unpleasant as our positive man, is not unpleasant in the same way. He is what we should style a matter-of-fact person, despising romance and sentiment, taking his stand on realities alone. And from its inevitable suggestion of such a character the word Positivism has come to be most gravely misunderstood in France, as if it were a philosophy which deliberately excluded from human life such elements as poetry, tenderness, and self-devotion; just as, by an equally gross misunderstanding, Utilitarianism has been supposed to exclude them in England. Still the French meaning will help us to understand that positivism is so called, in the first instance, because it professes to teach matter of fact instead of matter of

fiction. Now, among fictions, Comte includes all theological beliefs whatsoever.[1] His sympathies were altogether with Hume and Diderot as against the deistical school of the eighteenth century from Toland to Rousseau.[2] And, again, unlike Rousseau, he entertained a very strong animosity towards Christianity as distinguished from Catholicism,[3] an animosity extending even to the character of its Founder.

If it be asked on what grounds Comte rejected theological belief, the answer is that the question has been already settled. According to him, the work of destruction had been sufficiently well done by the rationalists of the previous century, while their successors were more particularly called to the work of reconstruction. What is more, theology has been to a great extent spontaneously replaced by the growth of science. For the very essence of theological beliefs is to suppose that natural phenomena are produced by wills like our own, whereas science consists in reducing them to law, that is, to a system of invariable coexistence and succession. Thus positivism confronts and replaces theology, as a body of scientific doctrine giving an account of the world and of man adequate to all the purposes for which knowledge is of any value whatever. For, in seeking to make ourselves acquainted with the nature of things, our object, according to Comte, ought not to be the satisfaction of an idle curiosity, but the furtherance of human well-being. And this is not merely the only knowledge worth having; it is, after all, the only knowledge to be had. Things are only given in relation to our faculties, and are inaccessible to us out of that relation. Hence we are ignorant, and must ever remain ignorant, of what they are in themselves, of their essences. First and final causes, or in other words the origin and destiny of the world, are equally withdrawn from our observation, and are not to be discovered by any effort of reasoning. We are, of course, free to conjecture, but our conjectures, from the nature

[1] 'Radicalement chimériques comme toutes [les opinions] qu' inspire une théologie quelconque, restât-elle réduite à son dogme fondamental' ('Catéchisme Positiviste,' p. ix.). If this is not atheism I should like to know what is.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. x.

[3] *Op. cit.*, pp. xiii.–xiv., where the Christian doctrines are described as having much more than merited the repulsion felt for them during three centuries by the noblest Romans.

of the case, do not admit of verification. Positivism rejects not only theology but metaphysics also.

Here we come on a new antithesis, introducing us to a new aspect, or rather to two new aspects of the word positive. Positive science is not only opposed to theology as matter of fact to matter of fiction; it is also opposed to metaphysics as certainties to conjectures, and as realities to phrases. For metaphysical systems are all, without exception, not merely hopeless but illusory. In trying to account for phenomena they do but substitute a description for an explanation. Where theologians put animated beings as the causes of physical events, metaphysicians put the conceptions of their own reason in which the event is simply reproduced under an abstract form. Thus the mediaeval philosophers explained the rise of water in a suction pump by the famous principle that nature abhors a vacuum; and the doctor in Molière's comedy explains the action of opium by its dormitive power. These, of course, are extreme and very trite instances of the method in question, and had been objects of ridicule long before Comte. What constitutes his originality, in this respect, is that he reduced all metaphysics to a parallel procedure on a much larger scale, or at least suggested such a mode of criticism for others to work out.

His own interests lay in a different direction; they were not critical but reconstructive, scientific, and practical. He condemns the metaphysical method as not only illusory but misleading and obstructive. According to him, it still infests the positive sciences with sham solutions, such as the elastic ether in physics and the vital principle in physiology, which substitute the appearance for the reality of knowledge, thus hindering investigation into the actual facts and laws of nature. What is worse, the abstract method tends to generalise partial and limited views, stamping them with an absolute value to which they have no real claim, and whose unreality becomes obvious when the abstraction is referred back to the facts whence it is derived. For example, nature, as Galileo sarcastically observed, seems not to abhor a vacuum above a height of thirty-two feet. Opium contains ingredients which are not sedative; and alcohol only seems to stimulate one part of the nervous system because it deadens another part.

Comte's hostility to metaphysical ideas must, however, be

attributed above all to what, in his opinion, is their noxious influence on government and society, their anarchic and destructive character. Here we come to the very taproot of positivism, the desire to build up where other philosophies had been content to pull down. While substituting matter of fact for fictions and phrases, it accords but a grudging and provisional toleration to the rationalistic methods by which fiction is destroyed, and to the corresponding political system which organises anarchy under the name of constitutional or representative government. Constitutionalism avowedly bases itself on the rights of man; and these are a mere string of metaphysical abstractions which generalise and stereotype certain arrangements valuable only as indicating the decay and dissolution of certain exhausted methods of social organisation. The right of private judgment means only that the old spiritual authority has become fatally discredited, while the new authority has not yet been constituted or even announced. The right of the people to elect their representatives means that the feudal monarchies have gone to pieces, and that an industrial hierarchy has not yet taken their place. All the great and stable institutions of the past rested on theological beliefs which are now approaching their extinction; and in like manner the orderly progressive society of the future will be founded on the demonstrated truths of positive science, not on the sterile abstractions and negations of the revolutionary period.

Although without theological belief, that society will not be without a religion. It will have indeed what practically formed the essence of all theologies from fetichism to monotheism, the worship of man by man, for that is what anthropomorphism really meant. This new religion, which is the old one, will have its priesthood and its ritual, closely modelled on Catholic types. For Catholicism reigned over men's hearts and consciences not by virtue of its chimerical dogmas, but by virtue of its admirable adaptation to their social needs. As the consummate product of a long and difficult elaboration conducted under the co-operation of so many great minds, it cannot be destined to disappear after such a comparatively short-lived and imperfect supremacy.[1] Positivism meets all

[1] I think it is M. Faguet who has observed that this assumption of a final cause for Catholicism betrays a metaphysical lapse on Comte's part.

the legitimate demands of the religious revival, while rejecting its reactionary extravagances, by furnishing men's aspirations with a satisfying object, scientifically proved to exist as collective Humanity, and fitly typified under the consecrated image of the Virgin Mother and her Divine Child.

Such, sketched in rapid outline, and with especial reference to the side which alone interests us here, is the philosophy of Auguste Comte. In that reference Comte's analogy to Hegel will be at once perceived. There is the same reaction against reaction, the same return from romanticist dreaming to the healthier tradition of the pre-revolutionary period, the same frank acceptance of the Revolution itself as a step forward not to be retraced. As a complement and corrective to this radicalism there is the same wide and sympathetic grasp of history, the same preference for concrete realities, combined in both philosophers with a wonderful facility and fondness, often degenerating into pedantry, for the manipulation of abstract conceptions. Their respective attitudes towards religion are such as might be expected from a Protestant and from a Catholic thinker. Hegel values Christianity as a system of philosophical ideas presented in such a way as to be understood by the great masses who are untrained in the exercise of speculative reason. Everything in the creeds is true, but only true as interpreted by a method which certainly seems to deprive the articles of their most obvious meaning. To Comte, on the other hand, Christianity as a specific religion is both untrue and immoral. But incidentally the movement begun by Jesus, or more properly speaking by St. Paul, performed three inestimable services for humanity. First of all it gave a concrete embodiment to that monotheism which is the supremely generalised form of all theology, and which the greatest minds of Greece and Rome had already reached by a process of metaphysical abstraction. Then it furnished the germ whence the vast organisation of the Catholic Church unfolded itself in the course of ages. And, thirdly, it set up for all time a principle of vital importance to the healthy constitution of society, that is the complete independence of the Spiritual Power. The State has for its function to preserve material order and to organise industry. The Church, on the

other hand, having public opinion for its sole sanction, has for its function to educate the young, to watch over the morals of the community, and to direct its intellectual activity towards the highest social ends.

Such a division of labour is no new thing. It characterised to some extent the Catholic feudalism of the Middle Ages. It had been attempted in the polytheistic societies of antiquity, but with such an imperfect balance of forces that no permanent equilibrium could be secured. In the great Oriental theocracies the power of the priesthood rose to such a height as to paralyse the State, and to unfit its leaders for establishing a universal empire by armed force, and thus preparing the reign of peaceful industry. In the Mediterranean republics the spiritual power was almost annulled, with the result, in Greece, of liberating the human intellect from all authority, and thereby immensely accelerating its progress, at the cost, however, of complete moral anarchy, so that the political forces of the race were consumed in domestic dissensions; while in Rome a ruling military class at the head of a united people were left untrammelled in their career of universal conquest. A true equilibrium was first created by the Catholic Church, which, entering the Roman Empire as a new power, took up a position of spiritual independence, and negotiated on equal terms with the secular authorities. Every Catholic dogma was elaborated in reference to sacerdotal claims, and should be interpreted only in this connexion. Whatever the priesthood did for morality must be ascribed to systematised personal influence, not to the dread of future punishments, which are totally unavailing as sanctions of conduct. There is therefore no reason why a reconstituted priesthood, teaching nothing but the demonstrated truths of science, and without an appeal to the secular arm, should not do as much or more for the society of the future as their clerical predecessors did for the society of mediaeval Europe.

Like all men of great synthetic genius, Auguste Comte has been much disparaged and much glorified, much hated and much loved. We can hardly look forward to a time when his merits shall have ceased to be a subject of controversy, for there is no philosopher, from Pythagoras downward, whose place in the intellectual pantheon has been irrevocably determined. In life

he made many enemies; and his personal foibles continue to count as a deduction from his fame. Few writers have expressed themselves more clearly, and few with less charm of style. Wholly devoted to ideal ends, his life yet lacks the supreme dignity we are accustomed to associate with that exclusive consecration to the things of mind. Nor has the prophet of Humanity made good the moral deficiencies of the sage. For the founder of a new religion to be crucified and rise again on the third day is a less indispensable condition for its success than Talleyrand affected to believe; but it is hardly asking too much to require that he should either be raised above the multitude on a solid pedestal of authenticated heroism, or appear encircled with the aureole of a legendary reputation; and neither distinction can be claimed for the first Pontiff of the Positivist Church.

Returning from these semi-mystical pretensions to questions more susceptible of argumentative discussion, I would venture to say, paradoxical as it may seem, that the chief error of positivism lies in its concessions to the metaphysical method. Systematic thinkers are usually weakest on the side where they feel themselves most secure; and Comte is no exception to the rule. In excluding the essences of things together with their first and final causes from investigation, he seems to assume, or to admit, that there are such things, but that, like theological mysteries, they are placed beyond our comprehension. Here he follows Kant, or at any rate the agnosticism which Kant, whether he really taught it or not, has done so much to popularise. Now experience seems to show that the hope of solving mysteries offers irresistible attractions to the human mind; and the new Catholicism, supposing it to be established, is likely to be as little successful in preventing their discussion as the old.

This restriction of enquiry, however, to phenomena, implies more than the existence of unknown entities and causes. It also involves a distinction between appearance and reality quite in the metaphysical style, an example of that false abstraction which Comte himself truly characterised as inherent in the metaphysical method. He was not the first to enter a protest against this one-sided procedure of which the revolutionists had made fatal use in the political sphere, which the

rising study of history tended above all to correct. Coleridge's not very lucid distinction between reason and understanding was an attempt in the same direction—illustrating by the way the very error against which it protests—and Hegel's Logic, in some ways more positive than positivism itself, goes to prove the necessary self-contradictions arising from the isolation of conceptions only intelligible and fruitful in their combination. A deeper speculation will correct to some extent the mistakes of a cruder speculation; but the ultimate safeguards are only to be found in experience, and in the application of ideas to life. And even experience is infested by the metaphysical method, which tends to isolate what is now passing from its context in the past and future, from its coexistence with what is occurring elsewhere. Hence comes the fallacy, already noted, of giving a fixed and generalised expression to what is merely temporary, limited, and even accidental. Philosophers try to correct this other one-sidedness by forcing antithetical tendencies into an appearance of harmony. But there is a false synthesis as well as a false abstraction, and sometimes it is the more mischievous of the two, as imparting an artificial vigour to what is obsolete and should be swept away. And the practical impulse only makes matters worse by encouraging a hasty temper which frames premature generalisations that they may be applied at once to the reformation of mankind.

Comte, one may say, committed every possible mistake that the metaphysical method could suggest in attempting to build up a social science. Hastily abstracting the framework of Catholicism from its soul of theological belief, he uncritically gave that framework a value which was more than it was really entitled to; and he fell into this error under the pressure of associations peculiar to the time of his own early training. The son of royalist and Catholic parents, brought up, moreover, in the full flush of the romantic movement, he accepted its interpretation of history as final. Thus it happens that his enthusiasm for the mediaeval Church curiously recalls Hurrell Froude's sentiments on the same subject; and their agreement is natural enough, since both took their views from the writings of the French Catholic apologists. What had so great a past must have a greater future. In the same way, as war had gone on so long, and militarism had recently been developed on a

great scale by Napoleon, it must possess an element of enduring value. That element was military organisation, which Comte accordingly proposed to apply to industry, without considering whether this had not grown up and flourished under a totally different *régime*. And to treat industry under any form as the predominant character of society in its final stage of evolution was one of those premature generalisations founded on a limited experience which are a note of the metaphysical method.

It may be stretching the significance of metaphysics beyond even the extent permitted by Comte's own elastic phraseology if we apply it to his summary dismissal of war and theology into the limbo of antiquated practices and beliefs. But it seems certain that here also he too hastily assumed the permanence of contemporary conditions. St. Simonianism, the school in which Comte served his philosophical apprenticeship, was pacific and anti-clerical. The government of Louis Philippe, under which his system took its final shape, pursued a pacific and anti-clerical policy. Hence he became possessed by a conviction that war and theology were finally played out, that history had irrevocably judged and condemned them. I am no admirer of either, and I should be the last to maintain that they will not eventually be outgrown. But it is worse than futile, it is mischievous to shut one's eyes to present and pressing realities. We know by sad experience that there were vast abuses in Comte's time whose removal would have been hopeless without recourse to arms. Nor can we be confident that the still outstanding national and social controversies will not again and again necessitate an appeal to the same sanguinary court of arbitration.

As regards theology, there is still less doubt of its continued vitality, and that not least in the native land of positivism. It is still vigorous and active among us, profiting by that very indifference against which Lamennais blindly protested as the last and worst enemy of God, using all the resources of modern civilisation for its own support, playing off political parties and hostile nations against one another, necessitating a ceaseless reconsideration of questions which Comte fancied were finally closed. Those who will may call the negative criticism of religious beliefs metaphysical; but at any rate it is something

without which the positive sciences would find a difficulty in holding their own against superstition.

Comte's philosophy has been epigrammatically described as Catholicism *minus* Christianity;[1] a formula for which one of his English disciples has proposed to substitute Catholicism *plus* Science.[2] Combining the two, we get P = (C − Ch. + Sc.), an equation which exactly represents the three stages of thought, theological, metaphysical, and positive, combined in a synthesis which at once exhibits itself as an attempt to sum up and reconcile all the warring tendencies of contemporary thought—itself an eminently metaphysical idea. Unfortunately for the mediator, these tendencies quite refused to be reconciled on such a basis. Catholics and religionists generally saw in the system at the time of its first publication nothing but the negation of their religious beliefs. Liberals were offended by the concessions to their reactionary opponents; and men of science rather resented the dictatorial interference of an amateur with the method and scope of their studies.

The situation still remains practically unchanged. At no time has Positivism acted on public opinion in the way its founder anticipated, as a complete body of doctrine. What fell in with the tendencies of the age was picked out; what opposed them fell away. Like other great countrymen of his, Calvin and Descartes for example, Comte had more success abroad than at home. What recognition his philosophy now receives in France it owes chiefly to light reflected back from England, the principal focus of his influence. There indeed it has been enormous, though perhaps not altogether of the kind that he would have approved. Positivism, in fact, told on English thought not so much by awakening interest in new ideas as by resuscitating old ideas originally peculiar to this island and afterwards discredited by the religious revival.

I say 'this island' rather than England in order to emphasise the great part played by Scottish philosophers in the general intellectual history of Europe, and the extent to which they figure as precursors of Auguste Comte. Above all, Hume by his 'Essays on Human Understanding,' and Thomas

[1] Huxley, 'Collected Essays,' Vol. I., p. 156.

[2] Richard Congreve, 'Essays Political, Social, and Religious,' p. 265.

Brown by his 'Treatise on Cause and Effect,' accomplished the reduction of all knowledge to the establishment of the laws of coexistence and succession among phenomena, which positivism has systematically worked out. James Mill brought Hume's philosophy to England, and taught it, combined with Benthamism, to his son and to George Grote, thus preserving the tradition of eighteenth-century thought as against the transcendentalism of Coleridge, and the reactionary spiritualism of Sir William Hamilton.

Meanwhile another Scotchman, whose name we are not accustomed to associate with the cause of progress and enlightenment, was helping, after his fashion, to undermine every sort of conservatism and to revive the enthusiasm of the revolutionary period. It may seem paradoxical to represent Carlyle as in any way a fellow-labourer with James Mill, and still more as a precursor of Comte. Yet the perfectly unsystematic character of Carlyle's mind made it hospitable to a seething mass of unreconciled tendencies, some of them acquired by direct inheritance from the school against which his most passionate objurgations were habitually directed. Neither the vociferous romanticism of his youth nor the aristocratic Toryism of his old age should blind us to the undercurrent of sympathy with reforming rationalism never long unfelt beneath the roar and foam and spray of his superficial idolatrous absolutism. And his ambiguous, really undecided attitude between the opposing schools made it easier for some to find their way back from the obscurantist side to the steadier friends of reason.

Carlyle, to begin with, rejected all that part of religion against which the Enlightenment had made war, that is its supernatural element. 'It is as certain as mathematics,' he told Froude, 'that no such thing [as a miracle] ever has been or can be.'[1] For Roman Catholicism he had the hatred of a Puritan and a freethinker combined. He had the heartiest contempt for the Anglican revival and its promoters, among whom he most unjustly reckoned Coleridge; nor did the more liberal religious tendencies of such divines as Julius Hare, Maurice, and the Oxford professors, find favour in his eyes. To be called a pantheist did not scandalise him except perhaps by rousing his dislike for formulas; and in his later years at least he

[1] 'Life,' Vol. II., p. 3.

summarily rejected the doctrine of a future life.[1] What he thought about the Hebrew Scriptures is sufficiently shown by his famous phrase about the Exodus from Houndsditch; while some vague declamations about the worship of sorrow can go but a little way to counterbalance a style of teaching in radical opposition to the spirit of the New Testament.

What has drawn many religious minds to the study and appreciation of Carlyle's works is the dislike for what he called 'mad joy of Denial,'[2] and his abounding sympathy with the 'ages of faith'—so long as there was no attempt to revive them for the benefit of the modern world. But here he was completely at one with the detested founder of Positivism, this sentiment being just the romantic element shared by both with all the most eminent thinkers and writers of the age. The difference between them was that Carlyle spared himself the trouble of reconstruction, except under the not particularly practical form of literary portraiture, an art in which he certainly surpassed all his contemporaries, cared nothing for general truths outside geometry and morals, and indulged in the maddest joy of all, the aimless denial of denial itself.

Towards the typical rationalist, Voltaire, Carlyle's attitude is more sympathetic than Comte's. Even in his romantic days he glorifies the great liberator for having given 'the death-stab to modern Superstition.' 'That horrid incubus,' he goes on to say, 'which dwelt in darkness shunning the light is passing away; with all its racks and poison-chalices, and foul sleeping-draughts is passing away without return. . . . Superstition is in its death-lair, the last agonies may endure for decades, or for centuries; but it carries the iron in its heart, and will not vex the earth any more.'[3] In private too Carlyle had been exulting over those sarcasms of Gibbon's which 'killed dead' what they stung.[4] Other death-stabs and death-stings not less keen had been delivered long before Voltaire and Gibbon by Xenophanes and Plato. Every age must repeat for itself this endless process of killing superstition. Here again Carlyle, like Comte, fails to explain why what he took for mortal

[1] 'Life of Tennyson,' Vol. II., p. 410.
[2] In the Essay entitled 'Characteristics.'
[3] Essay on Voltaire, *sub fin.*
[4] 'Reminiscences,' Vol. I., p. 102.

thrusts seemed to others vain blows, malicious mockery, and the show of violence offered to a majestic apparition invulnerable as air.

In 1837 Carlyle's 'French Revolution' opened that splendid period of narrative literature in history and fiction which lasted for nearly half a century, terminating with his own biography by Froude. It is not, however, as a literary masterpiece that the book interests us here, but as a sign of the times. Up till then the Revolution had, in Britain, been chiefly studied and written about by orthodox Tories, to whom it was an abomination quite as much on religious as on political grounds. So intimate indeed was the connexion between its two aspects that, as I have already mentioned, John Mill gave up his intention of writing its history on finding that he could not do the work adequately without disclosing his own very unpopular religious opinions at the risk of ruining his official career, and consequently handed over his materials to Carlyle, who felt no such obligation or dreaded no such persecution. I need hardly say that Carlyle is thoroughly on the side of the French people, as against the defenders of the *Ancien Régime*, while at the same time he recognises that the shams and shows which the revolution burned up stood for what had once been realities but were now nuisances. On the subject of religion the writer's silence is perhaps more eloquent than any words could then have been; and Anthony Froude, when he read the work, perceived at once that it represented a tendency diametrically opposed to that impressed on him by his brother and by Dr. Newman.

Three years later, in lecturing on Hero-worship, Carlyle admits only a single representative of Catholic Christianity, Dante, into his pantheon. More than half the whole number are Protestants, and of the remainder one is Mahomet, a great object of eighteenth-century admiration. Romanticism, already made ridiculous by the Eglinton tournament, is evidently giving way at every point before the modern spirit. But Carlyle had neither the organising and combining genius nor the scientific knowledge needed in order to concentrate all the scattered forces of that spirit into a solid body of doctrine massive enough to walk over the pietistic revival and to trample it into impotence if not into silence. Least of all had

he the intelligence and sympathy to appreciate what Comte had done, and to make his services available for restoring the supremacy of reason over English thought. That function fell to his friend, and at one time seeming disciple, John Stuart Mill.

Mill and Carlyle are generally opposed to one another as representing fundamental divergencies of method and conclusion; and extreme partisans are apt to describe them as respectively embodying what was best, or worst, in the philosophic direction of the early and middle Victorian periods. Nevertheless, both then and afterwards ingenuous youth continued to study the writings of both masters with about equal admiration, and without any particular sense of distraction or disturbance resulting from the superficial conflict of their teaching. Indeed, as neither of them agreed with himself, the fact of their not agreeing with one another counted for less than would have been felt in the case of more consistent or less candid guides.

Brought up by his father to be 'a sort of utilitarian Messiah,'[1] the younger Mill early acquired an enthusiasm for classical ideals which combined with a naturally impulsive and romantic temperament to alienate him from what he considered the cold and narrow-minded dogmatism of the Benthamite school. Wordsworth's poetry early became his favourite reading, although for genius he rated Shelley higher. At that time utilitarians still believed that self-interest was the only trustworthy motive of conduct, and that the only way to make men virtuous was by teaching them to identify their private happiness with the greatest happiness of the greatest number. As Plato, the Stoics, and Butler held precisely the same opinion, there could be nothing particularly degrading or dangerous about it; but it had the fault of not being true, as Mill himself soon ascertained by simple introspection. Imagining a state of society in which the Benthamite ideals should be perfectly realised, he asked himself whether that would be enough to secure his own personal happiness, and his inner consciousness told him that it would not.[2] Mill found his way out of the difficulty in a manner which, as he describes it, is not very easy to follow; but as an intelligible

[1] James Martineau's phrase.

[2] 'Autobiography,' p. 134.

result we learn that he was led to attach great importance to the culture of feeling; and that he found Wordsworth's poetry a valuable means to that end. His new studies brought him into sympathy with the Coleridgean school as represented by Sterling and Maurice, who helped to widen his views, and were probably influenced in their turn by him.

Another Benthamite principle, based on the same primary law of self-interest as the mainspring of conduct, was the desirability of establishing a representative government based on universal suffrage. Under such a constitution whatever policy commanded the adhesion of the majority would prevail; and as every one pursued his own happiness, this would approach as nearly as possible to realising the greatest happiness of the greatest number. James Mill is chiefly responsible for this practical application of the utilitarian philosophy, and his version of the theory was made the subject of a vigorous attack by Macaulay in the 'Edinburgh Review.' John Mill thought Macaulay's arguments conclusive as against his father, but remained dissatisfied with the empirical Whig method of studying politics, and was left without any fixed opinions on the question.

At this juncture the positivist influence first intervened. At the time of the Benthamite controversy with Macaulay Mill came across a youthful work of Auguste Comte's entitled '*Système de Politique Positive*,' which, according to a statement made many years afterwards, contributed more than any other cause to detach him from the Benthamite school.[1] But Mill's adhesion to the new philosophy was at first much more limited than it afterwards became. What he learned from the 'Politique' acted more by suggestion than by direct instruction, and more as a solvent of his former views than as putting anything solid in their place. Certainly in his private correspondence he subjects Comte's ideas to a very severe criticism, which seems not to leave one stone of the system standing on another. More particularly he regards it as totally unfitted for the English people, whose distrust for general ideas would prevent them from even looking at it.[2] General beliefs, according to

[1] In his first letter to Comte (1842). 'Lettres inédites de J. S. Mill à Auguste Comte,' p. 2.

[2] 'Correspondance inédite avec Gustave D'Eichthal,' p. 127.

Mill, theological or otherwise, do not determine the stages of civilisation; for, were it so, there would not be many nations professing Christianity whose conduct is its practical negation.[1] Whatever may be the case in France, in England the great capitalists, whom Comte proposes to make the supreme rulers of civil society, are quite unfit to be entrusted with such authority, being the most narrow-minded and bigoted class of the community, as regards everything outside their business and their domestic interests.[2] And the same remark applies to the artists and men of science, who are as little competent to direct the spiritual movement. Even supposing us to be in possession of a complete social philosophy, we ought not to make it known in the present unprepared state of public opinion. Especially where, as with us, theological beliefs have not yet given way to criticism, a beginning should be made by reforming such of our institutions as oppose a barrier to all progress, degrading and brutalising the intelligence and morality of the people.[3] For so long as wealth alone gives a high social position, the privileged classes can have no authority in matters of belief, cannot constitute a spiritual power. And in England this very accumulation of wealth is due to an unjust distribution of political power.

Characteristically enough, instead of parting with his speculative liberty, Mill reserved a completer liberty of speculation for the future, particularly as regards the sacredness of private property and of marriage. And while giving up the absolute desirability of democracy at all times and in all places as a mere metaphysical dogma, he continued to support the radical programme in England on the ground of political expediency.

I have already observed how Comte unwittingly fell a prey to the metaphysical method in his attempt to construct a social doctrine. That is to say, he gave an absolute and eternal value to the tendencies of his own age, combined according to a formula of his own devising, which he very properly denied to any of them taken singly. But this method, when once readmitted into speculation, cannot be limited by the preferences of any individual thinker, however ingenious or authoritative

[1] 'Correspondance inédite avec Gustave D'Eichthal,' p. 127.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 19. [3] P. 129.

he may be. As none knew better than Comte, it is essentially elastic and subjective; nor did these qualities belie themselves under the manipulation of a theorist whose temperament and antecedents differed from his own so widely as Mill's. The young English reformer 'looked forward to a future which shall unite the best qualities of the critical with the best qualities of the organic periods; unchecked liberty of thought, unbounded freedom of individual action in all modes not hurtful to others; but also convictions as to what is right and wrong, useful and pernicious, deeply engraven on the feelings by early education and general unanimity of sentiment, and so firmly grounded in reason and the true exigencies of life that they shall not, like all former and present creeds religious, ethical, and political, require to be periodically thrown off and replaced by others.'[1]

In fewer words, people are all to be taught the same opinions; they are then to think and say and do what they like, but at the same time never to change their opinions, at least on fundamentals, with the result of all agreeing together, and living happily ever afterwards. Neither Hegel nor Comte has perhaps quite approached the circularity of this square.

Some hints of the new philosophy were given in a series of articles contributed by Mill to the 'Examiner' under the title of 'The Spirit of the Age,' which drew from Carlyle the exclamation, 'Here is a new Mystic!'[2] We have seen that mysticism tends to develop into a solution of contradictories; and Carlyle probably meant that the anonymous journalist was on the track of one more such solution. Mystics always feel drawn towards one another; but personally they are even more intolerant of contradiction than the rest of mankind. At that time Mill and Carlyle had a good deal in common, and each was disposed to overestimate the other's agreement with himself. On a visit to London in 1831, Carlyle made enquiries about the author of 'The Spirit of the Age.' The first impressions were rather favourable. He is described as 'a slender, rather tall and elegant youth . . . not great yet distinctly gifted and amiable . . . seemed to profess about as plainly as

[1] 'Autobiography,' p. 166.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 174.

modesty would allow that he had been converted by the head of the Mystic School.'[1]

In point of fact the youth had learned nothing from Carlyle, had only come to see some of his own ideas expressed in Carlyle's writings, expressed with a poetic enthusiasm that delighted him. For a time they were warm friends; but the differences in their philosophy remained irreconcilable. Mill sent his supposed teacher a list of them, and received in reply the oracular intimation that he 'was as yet consciously nothing of a mystic.' When it became clear to the head of the School that there was no hope of his developing a mystical consciousness, Mill never discovered, but the melancholy truth must have become clear by the summer of 1836, two years after Carlyle had definitely taken up his abode in London; for at that date we find Mrs. Carlyle writing to her husband that 'poor Mill's very intellect seems to be failing him in his strongest point: his implicit admiration and subjection to you.'[2] Carlyle, on his side, describes Mill as 'withering into the miserablest metaphysical *scrae*, body and mind,'[3] that he had almost ever met with in the world. What could they want with one another? he asks.

What he wanted was that 'implicit admiration and subjection' which, if it ever had been given—which is very doubtful—had now been withdrawn. What Mill wanted was to find his way out of these barren dogmatisms, to help others out of them by an appeal to general principles, by fixing the standards of evidence, of proof, by organising reason; in short, to do over again for his age, in the light of modern science, what Locke had done a century and a half before for the age of the Revolution. Neither Carlyle nor any other mystic could help him to do that.

On the other hand, his early training in the great school of legal reform now proved of priceless value. Not for the first time in the history of logic was this beneficent reaction of practical interests on speculation then displayed. Greek dialectics had been built up on the model of cross-examination in

[1] Froude's 'Life of Carlyle,' Vol. II., p. 190. The modesty, I presume, is Carlyle's, not Mill's.

[2] 'New Letters of Jane Welsh Carlyle,' Vol. I., p. 60.

[3] 'Life,' Vol. III., p. 74.

the popular law-courts, with constant reference in its higher stages to the methods of geometrical demonstration. In like manner Bacon applied the procedure of legal inquisition to the more difficult task of eliciting the secrets of nature. And Mill had served his own philosophical apprenticeship by editing Bentham's 'Rationale of Judicial Evidence.' His precocity, says Bain, was most remarkable in Logic, on which his father 'put enormous stress.'[1] His review of Whately, written at twenty-two, is 'a landmark not merely in the history of his own mind, but in the history' of the science.[2] Interest in the subject of investigation was still further stimulated by his father's political differences with Macaulay, and by discussions between himself and other young men at Grote's house on the syllogistic logic. In 1830 he began putting down some ideas on paper, but on going on to the theory of induction, found himself pulled up by ignorance of the physical sciences, which, with the exception of botany, never seem to have interested him much, except as object-lessons in reasoning. Whewell's 'History of the Inductive Sciences,' published in 1837, supplied just what he wanted for this purpose, and enabled him to profit more fully by the ideas of Sir John Herschel's masterly 'Discourse.' Under this double impulse the Logic was resumed and two-thirds of it completed when, at the end of the same year, Mill came across the first two volumes of Comte's 'Philosophie Positive,' the only ones then published.[3] Wheatstone had just brought them over from Paris,[4] and had shown them to Brewster, by whom they were reviewed in the 'Edinburgh' for August, 1838, with enthusiastic praise for the author's knowledge and power of thought, but with severe reprobation for his rejection of all theological belief.[5]

The 'Philosophie Positive' was completed somewhat earlier than the 'System of Logic.' Mill read the successive volumes as they appeared 'with avidity,' though not always with agreement. On the general principles of knowledge he had come independently to the same conclusions as Comte, or rather had adopted the same ideas from the thinkers of the previous

[1] Bain's 'John Stuart Mill,' p. 26.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 36.
[3] 'Autobiography,' p. 209.
[4] Bain's 'John Stuart Mill,' p. 70.
[5] According to Bain, Brewster was using Comte as a stick to beat Whewell with (*ibid.*).

century. In completing the first draught of his treatise and in rewriting the whole he borrowed some conceptions of no importance in the present connexion. Finally, he gave in his public adhesion to the law of the three stages, according to which 'in every subject of human enquiry speculation first tends to explain phenomena by supernatural agencies, then by metaphysical abstractions, and in the third or final state confines itself to ascertaining their laws of succession and similitude.'[1]

Apart from agreement in particular opinions, the first edition of Mill's 'Logic' contained numerous expressions of enthusiastic admiration for the 'Philosophie Positive' and its author, well calculated to attract public attention and to win readers for that encyclopaedic work. And not content with this public testimony, Mill carried on an active propaganda for the views of Comte, with whom he was engaged in an affectionate correspondence, continued for five years and unhappily terminated, like his friendship with Carlyle, by irreconcilable differences of opinion. In this way Alexander Bain[2] and George Henry Lewes[3] were won over to the new theory of history; while Grote,[4] Sir William Molesworth,[5] and William Smith, afterwards well known as the author of 'Thorndale,' were induced to give it a partial acceptance;—Smith reviewing Comte favourably in 'Blackwood's Magazine' for March, 1843.[6]

We have now to set out the total effect severally and jointly produced by these two momentous works, the 'Logic' and the 'Philosophie Positive' on the course of English rationalism.

Mill's 'Logic' generally passes for the ablest and most influential manifesto produced by English philosophy during the nineteenth century in favour of the derivation of all knowledge from experience. And there is no doubt that Mill himself based his claim to recognition chiefly on that ground. Brought up to effect a peaceful revolution in public opinion, and first of all, to clear away the prejudices which still

[1] 'System of Logic,' Vol. II., p. 528 (ninth ed.).
[2] 'Lettres Inédites de Mill à Comte,' p. 240.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 224.
[4] P. 500.
[5] P. 181; cp. p. 356.
[6] This article first induced Bain to make a serious study of Comte.

obstructed the acceptance of new truth, he saw, or thought he saw, that such prejudices had their firmest support in the theory of *a priori* truths, that is beliefs given to us independently of experience, and possessing a higher warrant than experience can bestow. Of this theory mathematical axioms were held to furnish the strongest confirmation. These, it was urged, are accepted as soon as they are understood, and are thenceforth held with a conviction such as no proposition merely founded on experience can command. Such propositions as that two and two make four, and that two straight lines cannot enclose a space, are not only true but must be true ; we cannot conceive the possibility of their contradictories. Mill, on the contrary, maintained that the axioms of arithmetic and geometry have been learned, like everything else we know, from experience, and differ from what are called empirical truths merely through the psychological fact of an inseparable association set up between the terms of which they are composed. We have never seen two and two making a less or greater number than four. We have never seen a space enclosed by less than three straight lines. Consequently we cannot conceive such a case. It is what we call impossible.

The same principle holds through all orders of phenomena. Whatever we know is known by experience, and the most certain truths are those which have been generalised from the widest field of observation, while remaining uncontradicted by a single well-authenticated exception. Next to the propositions of arithmetic and geometry the most important and the best attested of such truths is the law of causation. Some philosophers have maintained of this also that it is known *a priori* ; but in this they are mistaken, and still more inexcusably mistaken than in the case of mathematical axioms. For it is a comparatively recent discovery that all events depend on determinate antecedents, and that on the repetition of the same antecedent the same event invariably follows. Ordinary experience presents us with a mere sequence of disconnected events, which seem to follow one another at random, or to occur suddenly without reference to any anterior event. Thus there is, as it were, a ready-made pattern on which to construct the notion of a world where the law of causation does not obtain, whereas there are no experiences that even seem to contradict

the axioms of arithmetic and geometry. What is more, the very persons who insist most strongly on an *a priori* derivation for the belief that every event must have a cause are also the most firmly persuaded that the will is free ; in other words, that human volitions are, to some extent, uncaused.

Mill himself found nothing in his own consciousness to justify the erection of causation into a necessity of thought. While asserting the absolute validity of this law within the limits of own experience, he refused to recognise its supremacy beyond those limits. For instance, he thought it quite possible that in the planets revolving round some remote star events might happen under some other law, or under no law at all. He does not seem to have contemplated any similar restriction on causality in time, as that it had only begun to operate a certain number of years ago or would cease to operate in any number of years hence. To have admitted as much would indeed have been fatal to the very existence of the law. For if the eternity of the causal chain be once denied or doubted, there is no reason why it should not be expected to break off to-morrow or next moment as well as a million years hence. Yet if Mill saw so much he ought to have seen that, in this respect, there is logically no distinction between time and space. We know by experience that causation is independent, and equally independent of both. When we speak of either as a coefficient we are referring in a loose way to quantitative variations in the agents really at work. Thus gravitation decreases as the square of the distance, simply because it is diluted by being spread over a wider area, in the same way as heat and light. So true indeed is this that if the law of succession among phenomena were found to vary, *cæteris paribus,* with their position in space, it is not our ideas about causation but our ideas about space that would be altered. It would go to prove that space was not homogeneous, and that the behaviour of the bodies contained in it was affected by the different constitution of its different parts. Thus the proposition that there is a cause for every change, so far from being shaken, would be enriched by a fresh illustration. The same reasoning applies to position in time, but not more to time than to space. Both time and space are, so to speak, infinitely weak. We may explain this with Leibniz by thinking of them as mere abstract

relations between real things, or we may explain it with Kant by thinking of them as subjective forms of intuition. But on either theory the grand fact remains the same.

I must add that, whatever may be the origin or validity of our knowledge, Mill seems to have been quite mistaken in the practical value that he attached to the issue between the experimental and the *a priori* theories. Both are compatible, and equally compatible, with a sound philosophy of progress, with what we call the spirit of true liberalism. On the other hand, either of them may be twisted into a support for reactionary prejudices and superstitions. It might even be contended with considerable plausibility that a close adherence to experience is less favourable to innovation than the appeal to principles transcending experience. James Mill may have felt this when he chose the intuitionist philosophy of Plato, rather than the more empirical philosophy of Aristotle, as the best instrument of education for his pupil. And John Mill had before long occasion to observe that Auguste Comte's close agreement with his own theory of knowledge left the founder of positivism as much a prey to ancestral prejudices about the position of women as any English transcendentalist could be. No one followed out his own rejection of apriorism with more unflinching consistency than George Grote; yet Grote stood immovably on the side of the slaveholders during the Secession War, besides setting his face stiffly against Mill's socialistic proclivities. On the other hand, Herbert Spencer, while practically upholding the theory that Mill thought so dangerous, certainly never associated it with the maintenance of abuses; and Thomas Green, who did more than any of his contemporaries to rehabilitate apriorism at Oxford, was conspicuous for his liberality and reforming zeal.

Mill had no wish to quarrel with theology, nor has he touched on its interest in this question. But it is notorious that the doctrine of an independent source of knowledge within the human mind has long been considered favourable to religious belief as against the claims of rationalism; and the new System of Logic was immediately assailed on this ground, although with the fullest recognition of its merits, by W. G. Ward, a pupil of Newman's, on behalf of the sacerdotal reaction. This antagonism belonged to the tradition of English thought

since Hobbes, and to the tradition of Western thought in general since Locke and the Enlightenment. Cudworth and the Cambridge Platonists had insisted on eternal and immutable truths as against the materialism of the Leviathan; Reid restored intuitionism in his recoil from Hume's scepticism; and his philosophy was imported into France by the eclectic spiritualists of the Restoration as an antidote to what they called the sensualism, by which they really meant the free-thought, of the eighteenth century; while Coleridge was using the same weapon, as reforged by Kant, to crush Unitarianism and infidelity in England. There is indeed a certain community between the great theological method of mysticism and the philosophical theory of a truth independent of outward experience. But just as mysticism, when consistently carried out, leads to pantheism, so also apriorism finds its logical outcome in a monism which is the destruction of religious belief, whether it be elaborated by the infinite subtlety of Hegel's dialectic or by the more summary conclusions of Schopenhauer's Sufficient Reason. Even such timid reactionists as Coleridge and Cousin felt this logical constraint, and in their few moments of candour avowed that pantheism was true. And quite apart from pantheism, any consistent theory of reasoning, aprioristic or experimental, must tell against whatever denies reason, whether by appealing to authority as the foundation of all belief, or to the alleged practical consequences of religious belief in particular, as evidences of its truth.

Such a theory was at length supplied by Mill; and, from a rationalist point of view, it constituted the real power and telling value of his Logic. It was as if what the Stoic poet implored heaven to do for virtue[1] had been granted for the glory of reason. She showed herself in visible form, and the powers of sophistry paled before the beauty of the forsaken goddess. In a style whose charm recalled the great classics of English philosophy, and in which calm lucidity was happily allied with passionate conviction, the author explained to English readers what they had never been taught before, what true beliefs are, how they are acquired, how extended, how interwoven for mutual support; teaching them more especially

[1] 'Virtutem videant, intabescantque relicta' (Persius, III., 58).

how the vast edifice of physical science on which they had been accustomed to gaze with stupid wonder, as on a fairy palace raised by magic arts, really owed its existence to a more systematic application of the same processes by which we find our way about in everyday life. And he showed how what had done so much for mankind was destined to do still more, not by multiplying the appliances of material luxury, or by enabling a greater population to exist in equal squalor, but by carrying into the study of mind and morals, of society and government, the same methods by which the properties of space, the mechanism of the heavens, the composition of matter, and the conditions of animal life, had been so successfully unravelled.

For through this whole work there breathes the high disinterestedness of French idealism. Unlike his great predecessor, Lord Chancellor Bacon, the apostle of modern utilitarianism has no word of recognition for his countrymen's worship of material wealth, ignores indeed the industrial applications of science to such an extent that, so far as I am aware, the omission has never even been noticed before. But this disregard of material interests involves no neglect of human welfare, understood in the truest sense. Like a genuine Platonist, Mill subordinates all other enquiries to the enquiry into the laws of mind, the knowledge which gives most power, the means by which man becomes master of his fate. Under the threefold impulse of his father's tuition, of Carlyle's enthusiasm, and of Comte's example, he reconstitutes philosophy on the lines of Hume and Adam Smith, including whatever had been won since they passed away, eliminating all mystical illusions, and retaining nothing of romanticism but its individualising distinctiveness,[1] its religion of chivalry, and its comprehensive sympathy with the past.[2]

No form of English theology, whether the mystical Bibliolatry of the Evangelicals, the mystical traditionalism of Keble and Newman, the Germanising pietism of Arnold and Hare, or the dualistic theism of James Martineau, could stand up for a moment before the stringent demands of the lew logic. But

[1] 'Logic,' Bk. III., Chap. xiv., Sect. 2.

[2] I am here referring not only to the 'Logic,' but to the group of essays written about the same time.

Mill's treatise gave much more than an organised system of reason: it gave, or rather it rehabilitated, an objective view of the world, which, to begin with, makes reason possible, and with which, in its full extension, theology cannot live. I refer to the law of universal causation, which Mill makes the basis of his theory of scientific Induction. How he works out the connexion between the two does not concern us here: the interesting thing is his way of speaking about causation apart from induction. 'Every fact which has a beginning has a cause.' 'The state of the whole universe at any instant we believe to be the consequence of its state at the previous instant; insomuch that one who knew all the agents which exist at the present moment, their collocation in space, and all their properties, in other words the laws of their agency, could predict the whole subsequent history of the universe. . . . And if any particular state of the entire universe should ever recur a second time, all subsequent states would return too, and history would, like a circulating decimal of many figures, periodically repeat itself.'[1]

Among Greek philosophers the Stoics alone committed themselves to such a sweeping generalisation as this; and in practice their teaching was complicated by various equivocal concessions to popular superstition. Epicurus protested against it in the name of human liberty. Spinoza revived the law of causation along with other Stoic principles, but never clearly distinguished it from the chain of reasons and consequents by which, according to him, it is represented in the world of thought, nor from the underlying Power of which both alike are expressions. Hume was more interested in identifying causation with sequence than in asserting its universality. So far as I am aware, Laplace was the first modern to give the principle this absolute extension; and Mill's formula seems to be taken almost textually from his 'Essay on Probability.' Since the 'System of Logic' first appeared, the law of universal causation has been invested with quantitative precision by the law of the Conservation of Energy, and has received an imaginative representation from the theory of atomic mechanism; while the doctrine of evolution has enabled us to follow in detail some of

[1] 'System of Logic,' Vol. I., pp. 363 and 385-6 (fifth ed.), pp. 400-1 (ninth ed.).

its most interesting applications; but nothing has been altered in, or added to its essential content.

Human freewill is, of course, excluded by the law of universal causation. A man's actions form part of the present state of the universe, and like everything else in it, are determined by the previous state; this, again, is determined by its predecessor, and so on backward until we reach a state of things which existed before the human agent was born, and a still remoter state before the human race itself came into being. More precisely: the actions called free result from conscious volitions, and these again from character and circumstance. But character and circumstance are themselves the effect of causes beyond the control and even the knowledge of the individual whose life-history they determine. It is entirely right and completely consistent with the law of universal causation that, as between man and man, moral responsibility should be recognised; that is, that actions capable of being influenced by conscious motives should be subjected to the approval or displeasure of the community whose welfare they affect. But that beyond and above this subjection there should be a transcendent responsibility to the Cause of the universe, involving the infliction of useless penalties on souls kept alive through eternity for their endurance, is an irrational belief, irrational because it assumes that ethical principles can be in contradiction with one another. Supposing the machinery of unconditional sequence to have been set going by a free intelligence, then indeed such a transcendent responsibility might exist. But its whole weight would be transferred from the creature to the creator, who might well be invited, in Edward Fitzgerald's words, to take man's forgiveness for all the evil he had wrought. After a long and weary round English speculation returns to the standpoint of Anthony Collins; and the sense of sin, on which all Church parties in turn had built up their religion, collapses at the first touch of revivified reason. It was easy to sneer at this resumption of the old positions as a retrograde movement. But it was necessitated by the ostentatious revival of old superstitions in the face of modern enlightenment. An appeal to the divines of the seventeenth century was best met by an appeal to the philosophy of the eighteenth.

Mill knew little of theological literature, and perhaps did not anticipate the far-reaching reaction of his principle on contemporary speculation. But he fully accepted moral determinism as a part of the universal order, and an indispensable postulate if social phenomena were to be brought under the reign of law. At the same time, with characteristic conciliatoriness, he worked hard to remove certain prejudices which, in his opinion, opposed themselves to its more general reception. People, he thought, justly objected to the notions of necessity and compulsion in connexion with the experience of voluntary action. According to him, their consciousness revolts, not without reason, at the constraint supposed to be put on them from without. But this, he explains, is a misapprehension. Even in the inanimate world, causation does not imply, as the old philosophy taught, that one event has power to produce another, or to necessitate its occurrence. Certain antecedents are always followed by certain consequents—only that and nothing more. And in the case of human actions there is just this same phenomenon of sequence, without any mysterious compulsion exercised by the motives on the will. Indeed the motives are a part of ourselves, so that we may be truly said to participate as determining antecedents in the course of events.[1]

Some vulgar misconceptions were no doubt dispelled by these considerations; and substantially they are still good as against the gross misrepresentations of orthodox apologists. But on the question of language Mill seems decidedly at fault. He talks as if the word necessity, as ordinarily used in reference to volition, involved a particular theory of causation, which theory he rejects; and he fancies that with its rejection the difficulties of determinism will vanish. 'There are,' he says, 'few to whom mere constancy of succession appears a sufficiently stringent bond of union for so peculiar a relation as Cause and Effect. Even if the reason repudiates, the imagination retains the feeling of some more intimate connexion, of some peculiar tie or mysterious constraint exercised by the antecedent over the consequent.' And he agrees with those who repudiate the existence of such a constraint as exercised over their own volitions. But, he goes on to explain, there is no such tie in the case of inanimate objects. 'It would be more

[1] 'System of Logic,' Bk. VI., chap. ii., sect. 3.

correct to say that matter is not bound by necessity than that mind is so.'[1]

It seems desirable to distinguish between the notion of a tie and the notion of a mystery, and to examine them separately. Ropes and chains offer familiar examples of ties by which bodies, both animate and inanimate, are attached to each other, and constrained either to move or to remain still. Mill would not deny that this is just a particular instance of causation, that is, in the last analysis, a phenomenon of unconditional sequence, referred by physical science to what is called the force of cohesion. To speak, then, of a tie between antecedents and consequents, merely amounts to interpolating fresh antecedents in the chain of sequence, leaving the notion of necessity exactly where it was before. It may or may not be a cumbrous and useless proceeding; but there is nothing alarming about it; nor does it explain the popular objection to the idea of compulsion as associated with volition. People dislike being assimilated to dumb driven cattle just as much when the conduct of a string of camels has been analysed into a case of invariable sequence as they disliked it before Hume wrote.

Nor does the introduction of the word 'mysterious' make any difference to their feeling, or serve to differentiate unconditional sequence from necessity. Quite the contrary indeed. Mysteries are facts which we cannot explain, but of which we feel sure that there must be some explanation, if only we could get at it. And so long as the explanation remains hidden there is always a sort of feeling that the fact might be other than it is. Directly the explanation is given this feeling vanishes and gives place to a conviction of necessity. We see that the fact not only *is* but *must be* so. Of course a new mystery may be introduced, but the old mystery certainly disappears. The equality between the squares of the hypothenuse and the squares of the cathetes in a right-angled triangle might properly be called a mystery were it only known to us empirically, from experiments on a number of such figures. Since Pythagoras it has ceased to be a mystery, and has become a necessity of thought. So with the fact of gravitation. It is a mysterious tie between the particles of matter just because we do not see the necessity for it.

[1] 'System of Logic,' Bk. VI., chap. ii., sect. 3.

Mill himself seems to have felt the insufficiency of his 'mysterious tie' as an explanation of the repugnance felt towards using necessity and determinism as convertible terms. For he goes on to offer another and quite inconsistent explanation, which is that 'necessity implies much more than mere uniformity of sequence: it implies irresistibleness.' And he refers to certain uncontrollable forces of nature as an illustration of his meaning. It seems, then, that the necessity from which nature was supposed to be freed has been unceremoniously foisted on her again. But in point of fact there are no such irresistible forces; there are only combinations of forces, exceeding at a given moment the combinations by which they are opposed, with the result that motion in a particular direction is produced. And just the same thing happens in the case of our volitions; otherwise we should never act at all.

There is, however, though Mill did not perceive it, a sense in which necessity is habitually predicated of some volitions, even by the advocates of freewill; and we need only consider the special circumstances in which it is so predicated to understand why even a determinist may object to its use in the case of volitions generally. People who are quite innocent of metaphysics, but quite familiar with the unconscious logic of language, constantly speak of themselves or of others as being compelled or constrained to do, or under the necessity of doing, this or that, say of dropping somebody's acquaintance, or of retrenching some item of expenditure, when in the abstract they may quite well be conceived as acting in a different way. Now, in all such cases it will, I think, be found on examination that the assumed necessity is of a hypothetical, that is to say, a logical character. It means that to act in the way specified seems the only course compatible with the possibility of retaining or procuring some end, the superior desirability of which is supposed to be above discussion. We are forced to give up an acquaintance because to keep it would be incompatible with our personal dignity or comfort, or material interest, or other advantage to us of paramount importance. Similarly with retrenchment. We *must* give up an expensive luxury because our income does not enable us to buy both it and what are called the necessaries of life. But the compulsion, being logical, is not felt to the same extent by every one, and by some is not

felt at all. And there is a considerable margin of actions where this necessity does not apply; where, consequently, the predication of it is felt to be misplaced.

Even as regards actions commonly described as done under physical compulsion the purely logical value of the constraint exercised reveals itself on analysis. In such cases the sufferer has a choice of evils; he may resist to the death or submit to the demands of those who have him in their power. In other words, the necessity is not a necessity of obedience but a necessity of choice. When we say that Mary Stuart was forced to abdicate, we mean that she preferred the temporary resignation of her crown to the risk of death by public execution or private assassination. Her grandson, in the same position, would probably have chosen death.

Even in the extreme case of fatalism the necessity would seem to be logical rather than physical. On the assumption that the whole course of history has been predetermined either by a supernatural intelligence or by the very structure of the universe itself, the future comes to be thought of as existing already, or rather as existing eternally; and therefore to suppose that any coming event can be altered by a free volition is to suppose that a thing can both be and not be, which would involve a logical contradiction.

Returning from this digression, we have to continue our examination of Mill's Logic in its bearing on the theology of his age. We have seen that the law of universal causation cuts the ground from under Christianity, as then understood, by destroying the responsibility of the creature to the Creator, and virtually explaining the sense of sin as an imposture or a delusion. More than this, rightly understood it excludes the possibility of supernatural interference in any shape, whether as miracles, revelation, or special providence. Such events, if they occurred, would interrupt the chain of causal sequence, would break the continuity between the state of the universe at a given moment and its state at the preceding moment. The only conceivable alternative would be to make God himself a part of the universe, to interweave his volitions with the eternal chain of sequences, and to think of them, like our own volitions, as ultimately determined from without. In other words, we

should have to think of him as a finite and conditioned, not as an infinite and absolute Being.

A treatise on logic naturally suggests the question of proof: how are we to know that a Creator, whether finite or infinite, exists? Personally, Mill had a great respect for the argument from design. Long afterwards in his 'Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy' he recommended it to the defenders of religion as the best and most persuasive of proofs, with the crudely anthropomorphic observation that, 'it would be difficult to find a stronger argument in favour of Theism than that the eye must have been made by one who sees, and the ear by one who hears.'[1] Commenting on this astonishing utterance, Grote pointed out that 'when we predicate of men that they *see* or *hear* we affirm facts of extreme complexity, especially in the case of *seeing;* facts partly physical, partly mental, involving multifarious movements and agencies of nerves, muscles, and other parts of the organism, together with direct sensational impressions and mental reconstruction of the past, inseparably associated therewith.'[2] In short, the law of causation will not allow us to stop at a creator whose own structure requires explanation as much as the structure he is called in to account for.

A thinker so acute as Mill must have been fully awake to such difficulties; nor, if he had overlooked them, could they have failed to be brought under his notice by the teachers and friends whom he so enthusiastically admired, his father, Bentham, George Grote, Mrs. Taylor, and Alexander Bain. But although he had been brought up without any religious belief, and habitually associated with others who had given up theirs, through life his attitude towards theology remained persistently conciliatory. Even when enunciating the law of causation in all its fulness, he inserts a saving clause for the benefit of theism, which, were it taken seriously, would deprive that law of its universality, and so reduce it to impotence. For, admitting the possibility of a supernatural agent, no man can tell by experience—Mill's sole source of knowledge—when some new volition of the hypothetical power may next intervene and set his calculations at naught. What we mean by

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 551 (third ed.).
[2] 'Miscellaneous Writings,' p. 303.

the reign of law is precisely the elimination of such possibilities.

But universal causation does more than exclude supernatural intervention; it excludes creation. To say that each state of the universe results from the state immediately preceding it is to say that the world has existed and will continue to exist for ever, or at any rate that it is coeval with time. And a Coleridgean who tries to get out of the difficulty by discarding time as an objective reality must be content to exchange theism for pantheism; personality, whether human or divine, being inconceivable apart from the time-form.

Mill puts the seal to this expulsion of theological belief by openly accepting Auguste Comte's law of the three stages, which declares that the final outcome of speculation is to substitute the explanation of phenomena by uniformities of succession and similitude for their explanation by supernatural agencies.[1] In this formula there is evidence of a compromise with the romantic school, but it is a compromise in the French style, clear, bold, and straightforward. Our English logician proposes a more ambiguous arrangement. In the vain hope of reconciling irreconcilable adversaries he would compromise on the compromise. Whewell had very naturally objected to a view of history which set his religion at odds with his omniscience. In his opinion the Positive Philosophy was distinctly contradictory to the Thirty-nine Articles. But Mill assures him that this is a misapprehension. 'The doctrine that the theological explanation belongs only to the infancy of our knowledge of phenomena ought not to be construed as if it was equivalent to the assertion that mankind, as their knowledge advances, will necessarily cease to believe in any kind of theology. This was M. Comte's opinion; but it is by no means implied in his fundamental theorem. All that is implied is that in an advanced state of human knowledge no other Ruler of the World will be acknowledged than one who rules by universal laws, and does not at all, or does not unless in very peculiar cases, produce events by special interpositions.'[2]

Constitutional government with a king who only suspends the law 'in very peculiar cases,' has not proved a very popular or permanent institution so far; and constitutional theism,

[1] 'System of Logic,' Vol. II., p. 528 (ninth ed.). [2] *Ibid.*

especially when served by ministers who are always trying to regain their lost ground, seems likely to share its fate. The most sparing employment of miracles stands logically on the same ground with their most unstinted profusion; and the historian who, on finding himself confronted by the phenomenon of a reported supernatural incident, refers it to 'a special interposition' of divine agency instead of to the laws of human credulity, is, so far, on the same plane with the savage who refers a thunderstorm to the more or less 'peculiar' temper of his god.

At the time when Mill wrote, such concessions to public opinion, however inconsistent or pusillanimous they may appear to modern rationalism, were probably indispensable to its earlier growth. Without them the introduction of his Logic as a class-book into Oxford and elsewhere might not have been permitted; and by seeming to take the sting out of positivism they prepared the way for its more complete assimilation by a younger generation of interpreters.

It remains to point out one more feature of the Logic; hitherto not much remarked, but of the highest value for the next stage of English thought. This is the immense importance given by Mill to the deductive method. Before his great work appeared, English ideas about the process by which scientific knowledge grows were in a state of the wildest confusion; nor can we be sure that they are extricated from it even now. National vanity came in to maintain and enhance the effect of theoretical ignorance. It was held, in defiance of history and reason alike, that the triumphs of modern science had been won by following the instructions of an English philosopher whose merits were taken at his own valuation. All discoveries were attributed to induction, and the whole organisation of induction was attributed to Francis Bacon. Conversely, syllogistic reasoning was made responsible for the dreams of antiquity and for the darkness of the Middle Ages. Even Coleridge thought he could not recommend Plato better than by reconciling him with Bacon. Bentham and the economists had certainly not reached their conclusions by induction, as vulgarly understood. But neither Benthamism nor political economy was very popular in the earlier years of the

century; and Macaulay held up the utilitarian philosophy to ridicule precisely on the ground of its deductive character, dwelling particularly on its resemblance to scholasticism.

Mill put an end to all this blind empiricism. He showed indeed, or attempted to show, that every general proposition must in the last resort be proved by induction, that is by particular experience. But he also showed that when a few universal truths, such as the axioms of geometry, the law of causation, and the laws of motion, have been obtained in this manner, it is possible, and even necessary, to reason down from generals to particulars, to take phenomena, as it were, in the rear, and to reach effects from their causes, when, owing to the extreme complexity of experience, the causes could never have been inferred from their effects. One may easily gather from his teaching, although he does not expressly mention it, that the ancient philosophers, and more particularly Aristotle, instead of being too deductive, were not deductive enough; their error did not consist in neglecting observation, but in trusting the evidence of their senses too far, in explaining the world by generalisations from their unanalysed experience. Mill certainly underrated the value of hypotheses; but Comte and Whewell, to whom he constantly refers, served, although in different ways and not without characteristic exaggerations, to redress the balance in favour of legitimate surmise.

Let us now see how this new exaltation of the deductive method came into connexion with the controversy between reason and religious belief. At first sight it might seem as if theology would gain by the revolution. For its professors, in building up their systems, have been distinctly partial to deduction; and the Tractarians in particular were adepts in the syllogistic logic. But in practice they worked by stringing together a series of assumptions, each of which represented a fractional probability of integral truth, while in the sum-total gained by multiplying all these chances together the disproportion between numerator and denominator was extreme. In contradistinction to such haphazard proceedings, Mill showed that the deductive method, as practised in physical science, involves three distinct operations, of which syllogism is only one. The first is pure induction, the generalisation of fundamental truths from experience. The second is a deduction by

pure reason of the particular consequences that must follow from these premisses, assuming them to be true. The third is verification, that is the comparison of these calculated results with the facts as revealed by direct observation, or as established by independent processes of reasoning. Only when the comparison shows an agreement as close as can in the circumstances be expected, is the theory held to be demonstrated. But, as practised by theologians, the deductive method breaks down at every stage. Their first principles are unwarranted by experience; their inferences are sophistical; and their verifications, when they offer any, are wholly irrelevant.

Such criticism, however, carries us no further than the rationalism of the eighteenth century, conclusive indeed as argument, but not supplying elements of popular conviction to the full extent desirable. Theology offers an explanation of the world which is most effectually destroyed by putting another in its place. Possibly the new system may itself be doomed to disappear; but meanwhile it affords a shelter under cover of which rationalism has free play; and sometimes on the removal of the provisional edifice the object of its attack is found to have disappeared. Thus from a merely negative point of view the philosophical speculations of the decades which succeeded the publication of Mill's 'Logic' have a value not necessarily belonging to them as interpretations of reality. Now, in these, as in all speculations deserving to be called philosophical, deduction plays a great part; and if Mill did not exactly suggest its employment to their authors, he at any rate inspired them with more confidence, and by educating a whole generation of critics, secured for them a more favourable hearing than might otherwise have been vouchsafed.

By a fortunate coincidence nearly at the time when the abstract theory of the deductive method was being presented to the most highly educated classes by a master-hand, two or three scientific deductions were so brilliantly verified as to arrest the attention even of the general public.

One day in the year 1839 a fragment of a large bone, 'like a marrow-bone in appearance,' was brought to the great naturalist, Richard Owen, by a seafaring man, who had obtained it from a native of New Zealand. It had been described by

the native as 'the bone of a great eagle;' but Owen assured the owner that it could not have belonged to any bird of flight. Further examination convinced him that it belonged to the skeleton of a gigantic wingless bird; and his knowledge of anatomy enabled him to reconstruct this bird, which no living man had ever seen, and which differed from all other known species of animals, living or extinct. A paper was printed containing a description of the hypothetical biped, copies of which were distributed over New Zealand, and search was made for its remains in all directions. After some years parcels of bones began to come in, and finally the whole skeleton was brought over to this country. It corresponded to the type constructed by Owen from the depths of his scientific consciousness. 'When the fragment of the shaft of a femur first arrived,' writes an eye-witness, 'the Professor took a piece of paper and drew the outline of what he conceived to be the complete bone. The fragment from which alone he deduced his conclusions was six inches in length and five and a half inches in its smallest circumference; both extremities had been broken off. When a perfect bone arrived and was laid on the paper, it fitted exactly the outline which he had drawn.'[1]

A few years later some slight perturbations in the calculated orbit of the planet Uranus led two astronomers, one English and the other French, to suspect the existence of a much more remote planet to whose gravitation the deflection was attributed. In complete independence, and even in ignorance of each other's researches, they set to work on the problem, and calculated the position of the unseen body with such accuracy that it was discovered in close proximity to the point in the zodiac to which a telescope was first turned in accordance with the directions supplied for the observer's guidance.

A little later still the discovery of gold-fields in Australia came to confirm a prediction of Murchison's. And although this prediction is now described as no more than a lucky guess, without any real scientific foundation, at the time it doubtless helped to increase the prestige of deductive science and the confidence of scientific thinkers in *a priori* methods.

One more consideration remains to add. Not only is the deductive method the great instrument of natural science in its

[1] 'Life of Richard Owen,' Vol. I., p. 151.

highest developments, and not only are its canons a perpetual criticism on the fallacious reasonings of theologians, but it is also by deduction that the truths of science are shown to be inconsistent with theological dogmas. For instance, the relation of determinism to the whole scheme of salvation cannot be understood without a chain of reasoning, too difficult apparently for some controversialists to master. They prefer to fall back on what are called 'experimental proofs' of religion, its effect, that is to say, on the character and the emotions of the believer. A favourite maxim of theirs is that it did not please God to save his people by dialectics. But, unfortunately for their position, some use of dialectics is needed before the more reasonable part of the world can be convinced that it has been saved, or indeed that it was ever lost.

It may seem to many that the relations of Mill and Comte to the science and theology of their age admit of a much more summary statement than is involved in the lengthy and somewhat complicated analysis which has now been brought to a close. They will say that the 'System of Logic' and the 'Positive Philosophy' embodied a materialistic reaction against the spiritualism of Coleridge and Cousin, and therefore by implication against the religion to which the sounder philosophy of those teachers, whatever may have been their personal heterodoxy, stood more nearly related than did the revived empiricism of Hume. Admitting that the logic of pure experience may not be incompatible with Christian orthodoxy, they will yet contend that such a logic slides more easily into its negation than a logic based on fundamental intuitions of the mind. For a knowledge of nature not wholly dependent on experience, a knowledge, that is, implying some internal principles that first make experience possible, seems to prove the supernatural origin of man, to establish a link between him and a spiritual power constituting the very life of things. And a philosophy which denies those intuitions must also tend to deny or to neglect the historical evidences afforded by Church or Scripture of a supernatural revelation supplying more detailed information about the unseen universe. Assimilating our souls to the consciousness of the lower animals, it will limit our existence, as theirs is limited, to a mere earthly and sensuous

life ; and, denying an immortal spirit to man, it will also deny that the world was created and is still governed by an eternal Spirit.

Such a philosophy, it may be urged, will naturally ally itself with the study of material objects, with the physical sciences whose very origin and purpose involves them in a constant appeal to the evidence of the senses. But the alliance will be as fatal to true science as it has been to true philosophy. For, from mathematics on, every branch of knowledge implies principles of spiritual origin in man, while also implying spiritual powers in nature.

There can be no doubt that Mill and Comte did present themselves under this aspect to many orthodox apologists when their works first appeared ; and many would look at them under no other aspect now. This view may be allowed to contain a certain amount of truth, but a truth which is neither philosophically the most important as regards the general evolution of thought, nor historically the most relevant to the present enquiry. To accept it would be, for one thing, to countenance that mischievous confusion between materialism and rationalism already signalised at the outset of the present work. And it would also be countenancing a serious misapprehension of the two thinkers under discussion, but more especially of Mill. Both were debarred by their theory of knowledge from giving any opinion about the nature of things in themselves, and therefore from adopting the theory of the eighteenth-century materialists, according to which consciousness results from the interplay of atoms composing extended substances ; and Mill in particular professed himself a Berkeleyan, regarding the conception of matter as a name for certain relations between our feelings. In other words, he accepted the very theory of human knowledge which Berkeley had originally put forward as a final refutation of materialism. And he was careful to insist on the perfect compatibility of his idealism with the existence of a personal God as well as with human immortality. Personally he had been brought up without any belief in either dogma, nor have we any reason to suppose that he ever changed his opinion on the subject, while leaving his philosophical adherents at liberty to draw an opposite conclusion from the same evidence.

Auguste Comte, however, stands in a different relation to theology; and there would be no objection to calling him a materialist in the popular sense, if the term could be strictly limited to a single connotation. Most people only care about speculative questions in so far as questions relating to life and conduct are affected by their decision; and in this respect their attitude should meet with the full approval of every positivist. Above all, the controversies between spiritualists and materialists only interest them as affecting their hopes and fears of a future life, or the nature of their duties in this life. Not caring for fine distinctions between body and matter, they simply want to know whether consciousness does or does not survive the visible and tangible nervous system with which it is at present associated; and the philosopher who answers them in the negative is what they call a materialist.

Now there is not the slightest doubt or ambiguity about Comte's answer. Individual immortality is a chimera. Phrenology is true; mind depends on brain and perishes with it. What Christianity teaches is false, and not only false, but mischievous, a diversion of the individual's thoughts from the interests of society to his own interests, his chances of salvation. Positivism promises him another sort of immortality, the survival of his memory in the thoughts and affections of those whom he has benefited and loved—a survival, by the way, not limited to man but shared by some of the higher auxiliary animals. More accurately, this subjective survival is already a fact, and has embodied itself in a true cult of the dead on the largest scale, especially in France, carried on concurrently with the official religion, and by some persons independently of it.

Our business, however, is neither with religion apart from belief, nor with imperfectly formed religious beliefs, but with those beliefs against which rationalistic criticism is directed. And as I have said, there can be no doubt whatever about the attitude of Comtism towards the Christian doctrine of a future life. And equally, I think, there can be no doubt that Mill's philosophy, so far as it bears on the question of the soul and its nature, tends towards the same conclusion. That which receives all its knowledge from without, that which receives all its impulses to action from antecedents of older date than its

own earthly existence, does not, to say the least of it, offer those guarantees of a supernatural origin on which philosophers of an opposite school have been wont to rest their hopes of its eternal duration.

Are we, then, to conclude that the popular view, or, to speak with more precision, the clerical journalist's view of Mill and Comte, is substantially the right one, that their teaching, in so far as it runs counter to theological belief, may be adequately summed up under the word materialism, and conveniently classed with the similar attacks of an Epicurus or a Lucretius, a La Mettrie or a D'Holbach, a Büchner or a Dühring—attacks which, from the clerical journalist's point of view, have been completely discredited by modern thought?

I think our answer must certainly be that the thing is not so, and that this would be neither a fair nor a full statement of the place occupied by Mill and Comte in the evolution of modern English rationalism. Either of these eminent thinkers might have admitted an element of *a priori* knowledge into his epistemology without altering the structure or relations of his system as a whole. There is no more difficulty in assuming that the mind possesses certain intuitions of reality than in assuming certain fundamental properties of matter as an ultimate and inexplicable fact. If theologians, grasping at this admission, went on to argue that by parity of reasoning moral intuitions must also be accepted as veracious, and that the existence of a God, in the Catholic sense, follows from these, positivists, and many others besides positivists, would meet them with a peremptory denial. They would say that the first principles of mathematics are guaranteed by the common consent of all reasonable beings, whereas there is no agreement about the alleged first principles of morals; theologians themselves, not to speak of mankind in general, being profoundly divided on the subject. They would point out that, assuming such agreement to exist, the very idea of first principles intuitively known involves their immutable and eternal character, excludes, that is to say, their having been created by any God as much as their having been created by any man. And they would add that, just as the moral law excludes a law-maker, so also does the moral motive exclude an avenging judge; for to introduce personal considerations into the choice between right and

wrong would imperil the disinterestedness which is essential to morality.

These are no mere hypothetical deductions; they had recently been verified on a great scale by the development of German philosophy on the lines of that very method the abandonment of which has been made responsible for the agnosticism of Comte and Mill. It had resulted in that Hegelian pantheism recently introduced to the notice of English readers by the Gospel-criticism of Strauss, and destined for many years afterwards to be regarded with even more dread than positivism by the orthodox Oxford apologists; for its artillery raked the whole line of their defences with a terribly destructive fire, and might even be exercised under cover of the Anglican flag.

Hegel and Comte had their points of difference; but in at least one respect their agreement was striking. Both appealed to the historical method as a support for essentially rationalistic conclusions, wresting it out of the hands of the reactionists, and showing that if it justified religious beliefs at a certain stage of reflexion, it pointed to their abandonment by the highest minds at the highest stage of intellectual and social evolution.

So much for the agreement between Hegel and Comte. Mill agreed with both in aiming at a readjustment of the relations between romanticism and the Enlightenment. At the same time the convergence of his Logic with Comte's Positive Philosophy had the further effect of rescuing the physical sciences from pietistic or hypocritical specialists, by organising their methods and results into a vast body of doctrine directly opposed, as it stood, to the current theology, and indirectly to all theology. They showed for the first time in history what scientific evidence really meant, and how it excluded belief in supernatural agencies. The limits of human knowledge as determined by both left no opening for a communication with any real or supposed Ruler of the world. Mill's law of causation virtually excluded the idea that the world had any cause outside itself. And when in after years English philosophy, growing restive at this limitation of its horizon, turned for help to Hegel, his theory of dialectical development was found to give an answer no more consonant with religious

belief than the negations of empiricism had been. Experience told us that this world was all we had. The profoundest logical interpretation of experience seemed to prove that no other world than this could, consistently with the nature of thought, be conceived; although the imagination of another world had necessarily entered into a preparatory stage of the long development by which the world-spirit has become conscious of itself.

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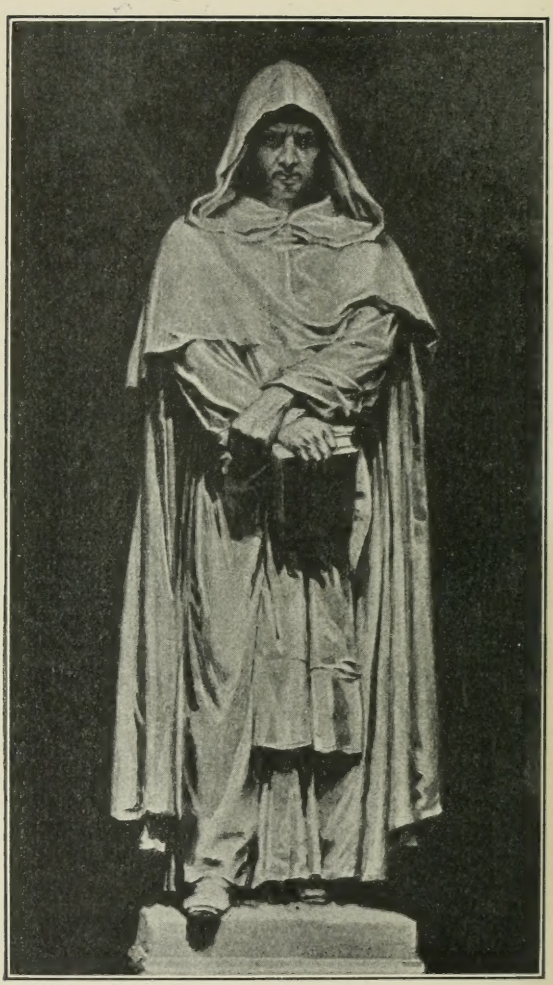

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Chapter I.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL RENAISSANCE

For a thousand years after the schools of Athens were closed by Justinian, philosophy made no real advance; no essentially new ideas about the constitution of nature, the workings of mind, or the ends of life were put forward. It would be false to say that during this period no progress was made. The civilisation of the Roman Empire was extended far beyond its ancient frontiers; and, although much ground was lost in Asia and Africa, more than the equivalent was gained in Northern Europe. Within Europe also the gradual abolition of slavery and the increasing dignity of peaceful labour gave a wider diffusion to culture, combined with a larger sense of human fellowship than any but the best minds of Greece and Rome had felt. Whether the status of women was really raised may be doubted; but the ideas and sentiments of women began to exercise an influence on social intercourse unknown before. And the arts of war and peace were in some ways almost revolutionised.

This remarkable phenomenon of movement in everything except ideas has been explained by the influence of Christianity, or rather of Catholicism. There is truth in the contention, but it is not the whole truth. The Church entered into a heritage that she did not create; she defined and accentuated tendencies that

long before her advent had secretly been at work. In the West that diffusion of civilisation which is her historic boast had been begun and carried far by the Rome whence her very name is taken. In the East the title of orthodox by which the Greek Church is distinguished betrays the presence of that Greek thought which moulded her dogmas into logical shape. What is more, the very idea of right belief as a vital and saving thing came to Christianity from Platonism, accompanied by the persuasion that wrong belief was immoral and its promulgation a crime to be visited by the penalty of death.

Ecclesiastical intolerance has been made responsible for the speculative stagnation of the Middle Ages, and it has been explained as an effect of the belief in the future punishment of heresy by eternal torments. But in truth the persecuting spirit was responsible for the dogma, not the dogma for persecution. And we must look for the underlying cause of the whole evil in the premature union of metaphysics with religion and morality first effected by Plato, or rather by the genius of Athens working through Plato. Indeed, on a closer examination we shall find that the slowing-down of speculation had begun long before the advent of Christianity, and coincides with the establishment of its headquarters at Athens, where also the first permanent schools of philosophy were established. These schools were distinctly religious in their character; and none was so set against innovation as that of Epicurus, falsely supposed to have been a home of freethought. In the last Greek system of philosophy, Neo-Platonism, theology reigned supreme; and during the two and a-half centuries of its existence no real advance on the teaching of Plotinus was made.

Neo-Platonism when first constituted had incorporated a large Aristotelian element, the expulsion of which had been accomplished by its last great master, Proclus; and Christendom took over metaphysics under what seemed a Platonic form—the more welcome as Plato passed for giving its creeds the independent support of pure reason. This support extended beyond a future life and went down to the deepest mysteries of revealed faith. For, according to the Platonic doctrine of ideas, it was quite in order that there should be a divine unity existing independently of the three divine persons composing it; that the idea of humanity should be combined with one of these persons; and that the same idea, being both one with and distinct from Adam, should involve all mankind in the guilt of his transgression. Thus the Church started with a strong prejudice in favour of Plato which continued to operate for many centuries, although the first great schoolman, John Scotus Eriugena (810–877), incurred a condemnation for heresy by adopting the pantheistic metaphysics of Neo-Platonism.

As the Platonic doctrine of ideas came to life again in the realism, as it was called, of scholastic philosophy, so the conflicting view of his old opponent Aristotle was revived under the form of conceptualism. According to this theory the genera and species of the objective world correspond to real and permanent distinctions in the nature of things; but, apart from the conceptions by which they are represented in the intellect of God and man, those distinctions have no separate existence. Aristotle's philosophy was first brought into Europe by the Mohammedan conquerors of Spain, which became an important centre of learning in the earlier Middle Ages. Not a few Christian scholars went there to

study. Latin translations were made from Arabic versions of Aristotle, and in this way his doctrines became more widely known to the lecture-rooms of the Catholic world. But their derivation from infidel sources roused a prejudice against them, still further heightened by the circumstance that an Arabian commentator, Averroes, had interpreted the theology of the *Metaphysics* in a pantheistic sense. And on any sincere reading Aristotle denied the soul's immortality which Plato had upheld. Accordingly, all through the twelfth century Platonism still dominated religious thought, and even so late as the early thirteenth century the study of Aristotle was still condemned by the Church.

Nevertheless a great revolution was already in progress. As a result of the capture of Constantinople by the Crusaders in A.D. 1204 the Greek manuscripts of Aristotle's writings were brought to Paris, and at a subsequent period they were translated into Latin under the direction of St. Thomas Aquinas, the ablest of the schoolmen, who so manipulated the Peripatetic philosophy as to convert it from a battering-ram into a buttress of Catholic theology—a position still officially assigned to it at the present day. Aristotelianism, however, did not reign without a rival even in the later Middle Ages. Aquinas was a Dominican; and the jealousy of the competing Franciscan Order found expression in maintaining a certain tradition of Platonism, represented in different ways by Roger Bacon (1214–1294) and by Duns Scotus (1265–1308). In this connection we have to note the extraordinary fertility of the British islands in eminent thinkers during the Middle Ages. Besides the two last mentioned there is Erigena ("born in Ireland"), John of Salisbury

(1115–1180), the first Humanist, William of Ockham, and Wycliffe, the first reformer—making six in all, a larger contribution than any other region of Europe, or indeed all the rest of Europe put together, has made to the stars of Scholasticism. This advantage is probably not due to any inherent genius for philosophy in the inhabitants of these islands, but to their relative immunity from war and to the political liberty that cannot but have been favourable to independent thought. Five out of the six were more or less inclined to Platonism, and their idealist or mystical tendencies were sometimes associated with the same practicality that distinguished their master. The sixth, commonly called Occam (died about 1349), is famous as the champion of Nominalism—that is, of the doctrine that genera and species have no real existence either in nature or in mind; there are only individuals more or less resembling one another. He is the author of the famous saying—the sole legacy of Scholasticism to common thought: "Entities ought not to be gratuitously multiplied" (entia non sunt præter necessitatem multiplicanda).

The capture of Constantinople by the Crusaders had led to Aristotle's triumph in the thirteenth century. Two hundred years later the conquering Ottoman advance on the same city was the immediate cause of his overthrow. For the Byzantine scholars who fled for help and refuge to Italy brought with them the manuscripts of Plato and Plotinus, and these soon became known to Western Europe through the Latin translations of Marsilio Ficino. On its literary side the Platonic revival fell in admirably with the Humanism to which the Schoolmen had long been intensely distasteful. And the religious movement that preceded

Luther's Reformation found a welcome ally in Neo-Platonic mysticism. At the same time the invention of printing, by opening the world of books to non-academic readers, vastly widened the possibilities of independent thought. And the Reformation, by discrediting the scholastic theology in Northern Europe, dealt another blow at the system with which it had been associated by Aquinas.

It has been supposed that the discovery of America and the circumnavigation of the globe contributed also to the impending philosophical revolution. But the true theory of the earth's figure formed the very foundation of Aristotle's cosmology, and was as well known to Dante as to ourselves. Made by a fervent Catholic, acting under the patronage of the Catholic queen *par excellence*, the discovery of Columbus increased the prestige of Catholicism by opening a new world to its missions and adding to the wealth of its supporters in the Old World.

The decisive blow to medieval ideas came from another quarter — from the Copernican astronomy. What the true theory of the earth's motion meant for philosophy has not always been rightly understood. It seems to be commonly supposed that the heliocentric system excited hostility because it degraded the earth from her proud position as centre of the universe. But the reverse is true. According to Aristotle and his scholastic followers, the centre of the universe is the lowest and least honourable, the circumference the highest and most distinguished position in it. And that is why earth, as the vilest of the four elements, tends to the centre ; while fire, being the most precious, flies upward. Again, the incorruptible æther of which the heavens are composed shows its eternal character

by moving for ever round in a circle of which God, as Prime Mover, occupies the outermost verge. And this metaphysical topography is faithfully followed by Dante, who even improves on it by placing the worst criminals (that is, the rebels and traitors—Satan, with Judas and Brutus and Cassius) in the eternal ice at the very centre of the earth. Such fancies were incompatible with the new astronomy. No longer cold and dead, our earth might henceforth take her place among the stars, animated like them—if animated they were—and suggesting by analogy that they too supported teeming multitudes of reasonable inhabitants.

But the transposition of values did not end here. Aristotle's whole philosophy had been based on a radical antithesis between the sublunary and the superlunary spheres—the world of growth, decay, vicissitude, and the world of everlasting realities. In the sublunary sphere, also, it distinguished sharply between the Forms of things, which were eternal, and the Matter on which they were imposed, an intangible, evanescent thing related to Form as Possibility to Actuality. We know that these two convenient categories are logically independent of the false cosmology that may or may not have suggested their world-wide application. But the immediate effect of having it denied, or even doubted, was greatly to exalt the credit of Matter or Power at the expense of Form or Act.

The first to draw these revolutionary inferences from the Copernican theory was Giordano Bruno (1548–1600). Born at Nola, a south Italian city not far from Naples, Bruno entered the Dominican Order before the age of fifteen, and on that occasion exchanged his baptismal name of Filippo for that by which he has ever since been known. Here he became acquainted with the

whole of ancient and medieval philosophy, besides the Copernican astronomy, then not yet condemned by the Church. At the early age of eighteen he first came into collision with the authorities ; and at twenty-eight (1576) [McIntyre, pp. 9–10] he openly questioned the chief characteristic dogmas of Catholicism, was menaced with an action for heresy, and fled from the convent. The pursuit must have been rather perfunctory, for Bruno found himself free to spend two years wandering from one Italian city to another, earning a precarious livelihood by tuition and authorship. Leaving Italy at last, rather from a desire to push his fortunes abroad than from any fear of molestation, and finding France too hot to hold him, he tried Geneva for a little while, but, on being given to understand that he could only stay on the condition of embracing Calvinism, returned to France, where he lived first for two years as Professor of Philosophy at Toulouse, and three more in a somewhat less official position at Paris. Thence, in the train of the French ambassador, he passed to England, where his two years' sojourn seems to have been the happiest and most fruitful period of his restless career. It was cut short by his chief's return to Paris. But the philosopher's fearless advocacy of Copernicanism made that bigoted capital impossible. The truth, however, seems to be that Bruno never could hit it off with anyone or any society ; and the next five years, spent in trying to make himself acceptable at one German university after another, are a record of hopeless failure. Finally, in an evil hour, he goes to Venice at the invitation of a young noble, Mocenigo, who, in revenge for disappointed expectations, betrays him to the Inquisition. Questioned about his heresies, Bruno showed perfect willingness to accept all the theological dogmas that

he had formerly denied. Whether he withdrew his retractation on being transferred from a Venetian to a Roman prison does not appear, as the Roman depositions are not forthcoming. Neither is it clear why so long a delay as six years (1594–1600) was granted to the philosopher when such short work was made of other heretics. It seems most probable that Bruno, while pliant enough on questions of religious belief, remained inflexible in maintaining the infinity of inhabited worlds. When the final condemnation was read out, he told the judges that he heard it with less fear than they felt in pronouncing it. In the customary euphemistic terms they had sent him to death by fire. At the stake, when the crucifix was held up to him, he turned away his eyes—with what thoughts we cannot tell. There is a monument to the heroic thinker at Nola, and another in the Campo dei Fiori on the spot where he suffered at Rome, raised against the strongest protests of the ecclesiastical authorities.

The Greek-Italian philosophers—the Pythagoreans and Parmenides—had introduced the idea of finiteness or Limitation as a necessary condition of reality and perfection into thought. From them it passed over to Plato and Aristotle, who made it dominant in the schools. Epicurus and Lucretius had, indeed, carried on the older Ionian tradition of infinite atoms and infinite worlds dispersed through infinite space; but their philosophy was practically atheistic, and the Church condemned it as both heretical and false. Probably the discovery of the earth's globular shape had first suggested the idea of a finite universe to Parmenides; at any rate, the discovery of the earth's motion suggested the idea of an infinite universe to his Greek-souled Italian successor; or rather it was

the break-up of Aristotle's spherical world by Copernicanism that threw Bruno back — as he gives us himself to understand — on the older Ionian cosmologies, with their assumption of infinite space and infinite worlds. In this reference Bruno went far beyond Copernicus, and even Kepler; for both had assumed, in deference to current opinion, that the fixed stars were equidistant from the solar system, and formed a single sphere enclosing it on all sides. He, on the contrary, anticipated modern astronomy in conceiving the stars as so many suns dispersed without assignable limits through space, and each surrounded by inhabited planets.

Infinite space had been closely associated by Democritus and Epicurus with infinite atoms; and the next great step taken by Bruno was to rehabilitate atomism as a necessary concept of modern science. He figured the atoms as very minute spheres of solid earthy matter, forming by their combinations the framework of visible bodies. But their combinations are by no means fortuitous, as Democritus had impiously supposed; nor do they move through an absolute void. All space is filled with an ocean of liquid æther, which is no other than the quintessence of which Aristotle's celestial spheres were composed. Only in Bruno's system it takes the place of that First Matter which is the extreme antithesis of the disembodied Form personified in the Prime Mover, God. And here we come to that reversal of cosmic values brought about by the reversal of the relations between the earth and sun which Copernicus had effected. The primordial Matter, so far from passively receiving the Forms imposed on it from without, has an infinite capacity for evolving Forms from its own bosom; and, so far

from being unspiritual, is itself the universal spirit, the creative and animating soul of the world. The First Matter, Form, Energy, Life, and Reason are identified with Nature, Nature with the Universe, and the Universe with God.

So far all is clear, if not convincing. It is otherwise with the theory of Monads. This is only expounded in Bruno's Latin works, for the most part ill-written and hopelessly obscure. It seems possible that by the monads Bruno sometimes means the infinitesimal parts into which the æther of space may conceivably be divided. Each of these possesses consciousness, and therefore may be considered as reflecting and representing the whole universe. A number of monads, or rather a continuous portion of the æther surrounding and interpenetrating a group of atoms, endows them with the forms and qualities of elementary bodies, ascending gradually through vegetal and animal organisations to human beings. But the animating process does not stop with man. The earth, with the other planets, the sun, and all the stars, are also monads on the largest scale, with reasonable souls, just as Aristotle thought. In fact, the old mythology whence he derived the idea repeats itself in his great enemy Bruno.

Beyond and above all these partial unities is the Monas Monadum—the supreme unity, the infinite God who is the soul of the infinite universe. Doubtless there is here a reminiscence of the Neo-Platonic One, the ineffable Absolute, beyond all existence, yet endowed with the infinite power whence all existence proceeds. Bruno had learned from Cardinal Nicolas of Cusa—a Copernican before Copernicus—to recognise the principle of Heracleitus that opposites are one; and in this instance he applies it with brilliant audacity; for every infinitesimal

part of the space-filling æther is no less the soul of the universe than the Monad of Monads itself. And both agree in being non-existent in the sense of being trans-finite, since there can be no sum of infinity and no animated mathematical points.

From Anaximander to Plotinus there is hardly a great Greek thinker whose influence cannot be traced in the system of Giordano Bruno. And while he represents the philosophical Renaissance in this eminent degree, he heads the two lines of speculation which, separately or combined, run through the whole history of modern metaphysics—the monistic, and what is now called the pluralistic tendency. With none, except, perhaps, with Hegel, have the two been perfectly balanced; and in Bruno himself the leaning is distinctly towards plurality, his Supreme Monad being a mere survival from the Neo-Platonic One.

Francis Bacon.

Francis Bacon (1561–1626) was by profession a lawyer, by taste a scientific inquirer, by character a seeker after wealth and power, by natural genius an immortal master of words. He began life as the friend, adviser, and client of Elizabeth's favourite, the Earl of Essex. When that unfortunate courtier, in disregard of his warnings, rushed into a treasonable enterprise, Bacon appeared as one of the most zealous of the counsel for the prosecution. Strictly speaking, this may have been his duty as a loyal subject of the Queen; it was hardly his duty, even on the Queen's commission, after Essex's execution, to assist in the composition of a pamphlet blackening the memory of his former friend and patron. In the next reign Bacon paid assiduous court to James and his favourites.

FRANCIS BACON.

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When the first of these, Somerset, fell and was tried on a charge of murder, he conducted the prosecution, and, finding the evidence insufficient, suggested to James that the prisoner should be entrapped into a confession by dangling a false promise of forgiveness before his eyes. Bacon owed his final exaltation to Buckingham, and as Lord Keeper allowed himself to be made the tool of that bad man for the perversion of justice. A suit was brought before him by a young man against a fraudulent trustee (his own uncle) for the restitution of a sum of money. Bacon gave sentence for the plaintiff. Buckingham then intervened with a demand that the case should be retried. "Upon this Bacon saw the parties privately, and, annulling all the deliberate decisions of the Court, compelled the youth to assent to the ceasing of all proceedings, and to accept" a smaller sum than he was entitled to (E. A. Abbott). On another occasion he exercised his judicial authority in a way that did not square with Buckingham's wishes, but quite legitimately and without any consciousness of giving offence; whereupon the insolent favourite addressed him in a letter filled with outrageous abuse, to which Bacon replied in terms of abject submission. This meanness had its reward, for in 1618 the philosopher became Lord Chancellor.

After a three years' tenure Bacon was flung from his high position by a charge of judicial corruption, to the truth of every count in which he confessed. The question is very complicated, obscure, and much controverted, not admitting of discussion within the limits here assigned. On the subject of Bacon's truthfulness, however, a word must be said. The Chancellor admitted having taken presents from suitors, but

denied having ever let his judgments be influenced thereby ; and his word seems to be generally accepted as a sufficient exoneration. But its value may be doubted in view of two statements quoted by Dean Church. Of these "one was made in the House of Commons by Sir George Hastings, a member of the House, who had been the channel of Awbry's gift [made to the Chancellor *pendente lite*], that when he had told Bacon that if questioned he must admit it, Bacon's answer was: 'George, if you do so, I must deny it, upon my honour—upon my oath.' The other was that he had given an opinion in favour of some claim of the Masters in Chancery, for which he received £1,200, and with which he said that all the judges agreed—an assertion which all the judges denied. Of these charges there is no contradiction." The denial of Bacon that he ever allowed his judgments to be influenced by bribes, and his assertion that he was the justest judge since his own father, cannot, then, count for much. As to the plea that the justice of his sentences was never challenged, who was to challenge it? The successful suitor would hold his tongue ; and the unsuccessful suitor could hardly be expected to complete his own ruin by going to law again on the strength of the Chancellor's condemnation.

Bacon, at any rate, knew quite well that to take presents before judgment was wrong and criminal, as his answer to Egerton sufficiently shows—an answer which also fully disposes of the plea that to take such presents was the common custom of the age. Moreover, had such been the common custom, Bacon might have taken his trial and pleaded it as a sufficient apology or extenuation for his own conduct. This would have been a somewhat more dignified course

than the one he actually pursued, which was to plead guilty to all the charges, throwing himself on the mercy of the Lords. It has been suggested that he did this at the desire of his powerful patrons, whose malpractices might have been brought to light by a public investigation. As his punishment was immediately remitted, some arrangement with the King and Buckingham seems probable. But for an innocent man to have saved himself by a false acknowledgment of guilt would, as Macaulay shows, have been still more infamous than to take bribes.

The desperate efforts of some apologists to whitewash Bacon are apparently due to a very exaggerated estimate of his services to mankind. Other critics give themselves the pleasure of painting what has been called a Rembrandt portrait, with noon on the forehead and night at the heart. And a third class argue from a rotten morality to a rotten intelligence. In fact, Bacon as little deserves to be called the wisest and greatest as the meanest of mankind. He really loved humanity, and tried hard to serve it, devoting a truly philosophical intellect to that end. The service was to consist in an immense extension of man's power over nature, to be obtained by a complete knowledge of her secrets; and this knowledge he hoped to win by reforming the methods of scientific investigation. Unfortunately, intellect alone proved unequal to that mighty task. Bacon passes, and not without good grounds, for a great upholder of the principle that truth can only be learned by experience. But his philosophy starts by setting that principle at defiance. He who took all knowledge for his province omitted from his survey the rather important subject of knowledge itself, its limits and its laws. Had his attention

been drawn that way, the very first requisite, on empirical principles, would have been to take stock of the leading truths already ascertained. But the enormous vanity of the amateur reformer seems to have persuaded him that these amounted to little or nothing. The later Renaissance was an age of intense scientific activity, conditioned, in the first instance, by a revival of Greek learning. Already before the middle of the sixteenth century great advance had been made in algebra, trigonometry, astronomy, mineralogy, botany, anatomy, and physiology. Before the publication of the *Novum Organum* Napier had invented logarithms, Galileo was reconstituting physics, Gilbert had created the science of magnetism, and Harvey had discovered the circulation of the blood. These were facts that Bacon took no pains to study; he either ignores or slights or denies the work done by his illustrious predecessors and contemporaries. That he rejected the Copernican theory with scorn is an exaggeration; but he never accepted it, notwithstanding arguments that the best astronomers of his time found convincing; and the longer he lived the more unfavourable became his opinion of its merits. And it is certain that Tycho Brahe's wonderful mass of observations, with the splendid generalisations based on them by Kepler, are never mentioned in his writings. Now what really ruined Aristotelianism was the heliocentric astronomy, as Bruno perfectly saw; and ignorance of this left Bacon after all in the bonds of medieval philosophy.

We have seen in studying Bruno that the very soul of Aristotle's system was his distinction between form and matter, and this distinction Bacon accepted without examination from scholasticism. The purpose of his

life was to ascertain by what combination of forms each particular body was constituted, and then, by artificially superinducing them on some portion of matter, to call the desired substance into existence. His celebrated inductive method was devised as a means to that end. To discover the forms "we are instructed first to draw up exhaustive tables of the phenomena and forms under investigation, and then to exclude from our list any 'form' which does not invariably co-exist with the phenomenon of which *the* form is sought. For example, if we are trying to discover the form of heat it will not do to adduce 'celestial nature'; for, though the sun's light is hot, that of the moon is cold. After a series of such *exclusions*, Bacon believed that a single form would finally remain to be the invariable cause of the phenomenon investigated, and of nothing else" (F. C. S. Schiller).

As Dr. Schiller observes, this *method of exclusions* is not new; nor, indeed, does Bacon claim to have originated it; at least he observes in his *Novum Organum* that it had been already employed by Plato to a certain extent for the purpose of discussing definitions and ideas. And elsewhere he praises Plato as "a man (and one that surveyed all things from a lofty cliff) for having discerned in his doctrine of Ideas that Forms were the true object of knowledge; howsoever he lost the fruit of this most true opinion by considering and trying to apprehend Forms as absolutely abstracted from matter, whence it came that he turned aside to theological speculations." Bacon must have known that this reproach does not apply to Aristotle; as, indeed, the very schoolmen knew that he did not—except in the single case of God—give Forms a separate

existence. But, probably from jealousy, he specially hated Aristotle, and in this particular instance the Stagirite more particularly excited his hostility by identifying Forms with Final Causes. These Bacon rather contemptuously handed over to the sole cognisance of theology as consecrated virgins bearing no fruit. As a point of scientific method this condemnation of teleology is quite unjustified even in the eyes of inquirers who reject the theological argument from design. To a Darwinian, purpose means survival value, and the parts of an organism are so many utilities evolved in the action and reaction between living beings and their environment. But Bacon disliked any theory tending to glorify the existing arrangements of nature as perfect and unalterable achievements, for the good reason that it threatened to discountenance his own scheme for practically creating the world over again with exclusive reference to the good of humanity. Thus in his Utopia, the *New Atlantis*, there are artificial mines, producing artificial metals, plants raised without seeds, contrivances for turning one tree or plant into another, for prolonging the lives of animals after the removal of particular organs, for making "a number of kinds of serpents, worms, flies, fishes of putrefaction; whereof some are advanced to be perfect creatures like beasts or birds"; with flying-machines, submarines, and perpetual motions—in short, a general anticipation of Jules Verne and Mr. H. G. Wells.

Such dreams, however, do not entitle Bacon to be regarded as a true prophet of modern science and modern mechanical inventions. In themselves his ideas do not go beyond the magic of the Middle Ages, or rather of all ages. The original thing was his

Method; and this Method, considered as a means for surprising the secrets of nature, we know to be completely chimerical, because there are no such Forms as he imagined, to be enucleated by induction, with or without the Method of Exclusion. The truth is that the inductive method which he borrowed from Socrates and Plato was originally created by Athenian philosophy for the humanistic studies of law, morality, æsthetics, and psychology. Physical science, on the other hand, should be approached, as the Greeks rightly felt, through the door of mathematics, an instrument of whose potency the great Chancellor notoriously had no conception. Thus his prodigious powers would have been much more usefully devoted to moral philosophy. As it is, the *Essays* alone remain to show what great things he might have done by limiting himself to the subjects with which they deal. The famous logical and physical treatises, the *Novum Organum* and the *De Augmentis*, notwithstanding their wealth and splendour of language, are to us at the present day less living than the fragments of early Greek thought, than most of Plato, than much of Aristotle, than Atomism as expounded by Lucretius.

Macaulay rests his claim of the highest place among philosophers for Bacon not on his inductive theory, to which the historian rightly denies any novelty, but on the new purpose and direction that the search for knowledge is assumed to have received from his teaching. On this view the whole of modern science has been created by the desire to convert nature into an instrument for the satisfaction of human wants—an ambition dating from the publication of the *Novum Organum*. The claim will not stand, for two reasons. The first is that the great movement of modern science

began at least half a century before Bacon's birth, growing rapidly during his life, but without his knowledge, and continuing its course without being perceptibly accelerated by his intervention ever since. The one man of science who most commonly passes for his disciple is Robert Boyle (1627–1691). But Boyle did not read the *Novum Organum* before he was thirty, whereas, residing at Florence before fifteen, he received a powerful stimulus from the study of Galileo. And his chemistry was based on the atomic theory which Bacon rejected.

The second reason for not accepting Macaulay's claim is that in modern Europe no less than in ancient Greece the great advances in science have only been made by those who loved knowledge for its own sake, or, if the expression be preferred, simply for the gratification of their intellectual curiosity. No doubt their discoveries have added enormously to the utilities of life ; but such advantages have been gained on the sole condition of not making them the primary end in view. The labours of Bacon's own contemporaries, Kepler and Gilbert, have led to the navigation of the sea by lunar distances, and to the various industrial applications of electro-magnetism ; but they were undertaken without a dream of these remote results. And in our own day the greatest of scientific triumphs, which is the theory of evolution, was neither worked out with any hope of material benefits to mankind nor has it offered any prospect of them as yet. The same may be said of modern sidereal astronomy. From the humanist point of view it would not be easy to justify the enormous expenditure of energy, money, and time that this science has absorbed. The schoolmen have been much ridiculed for discussing the question how

many angels could dance on the point of a needle ; but as a purely speculative problem it surely merits as much attention as the total number of the stars, the rates of their velocities, or the law of their distribution through space. A schoolman might even have urged in justification of his curiosity that some of us might feel a reasonable curiosity about the exact size—if size they have—of beings with whom we hope to associate one day ; whereas by the confession of the astronomers themselves neither we nor our descendants can ever hope to verify by direct measurement the precarious guesses of their science in this branch of celestial statics and dynamics.

Thomas Hobbes.

It has been shown that one momentous effect of the Copernican astronomy, as interpreted by Giordano Bruno, was to reverse the relative importance ascribed in Aristotle's philosophy to the two great categories of Power and Act, giving to Power a value and dignity of which it had been stripped by the judgment of Plato and Aristotle. Even Epicurus, when he rehabilitated infinite space, had been careful as a moralist to urge the expediency of placing a close limitation on human desires, denouncing the excesses of avarice and ambition more mildly but not less decisively than the contemporary Stoic school. Thus Lucretius describes his master as travelling beyond the flaming walls of the world only that he may bring us back a knowledge of the fixed barrier set by the very laws of existence to our aspirations and hopes.

The classic revival of the Renaissance did not bring back the Greek spirit of moderation. On the contrary, the new world, the new astronomy, the new monarchy,

and the new religion combined to create such a sense of Power, in contradistinction to Act, as the world had never before known. For us this new feeling has received its most triumphant artistic expression from Shakespeare and Milton, for France from Rabelais, for Italy from Ariosto and Michelangelo. In philosophy Bacon strikes the same note when he values knowledge as a source of power—knowledge which for Greek philosophy meant rather a lesson in self-restraint. And this idea receives a further development from Bacon's chief successor in English philosophy, Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), in whose system love of power figures as the very essence of human nature, the self-conscious manifestation of that Motion which is the real substance of the physical world.

Hobbes was a precocious child, and received a good school training; but the five years he spent at Oxford added nothing to his information, and a continental tour with the young heir of the Cavendishes had no other effect than to convince him of the general contempt into which the scholasticism still taught at Oxford had fallen. On returning to England, he began his studies over again in the Cavendish library, acquiring a thorough familiarity with the classic literature of Greece and Rome, a deep hatred (imbibed through Thucydides) of democracy, and a genuinely antique theory that the State should be supreme in religious no less than in civil matters. Amid these studies Hobbes occasionally enjoyed the society of Bacon, then spending his last years in the retirement of Gorhambury. As secretary and Latin translator he proved serviceable to the ex-Chancellor, but remained quite unaffected by his inductive and experimental philosophy. Indeed, the determining impulse of his

speculative activity came from the opposite quarter. Going abroad once more as travelling tutor, at the age of forty, he chanced on a copy of Euclid in a gentleman's library lying open at the famous Forty-Seventh Proposition. His first impulse was to reject the theorem as impossible; but, on going backwards from proposition to proposition, he laid down the book not only convinced, but "in love with geometry."

Beginning so late in life, his ulterior studies led Hobbes into the belief that he had squared the circle, besides the far more pernicious error of applying the deductive method of geometry to the solution of political problems. Could he and Bacon have exchanged philosophies, the brilliant faculties of each might have been employed to better purpose. The categories of Form and Matter, combined with the logic of elimination and tentative generalisation, would have found a fitting field for their application in the familiar facts of human nature. But those facts refused to be treated as so many wheels, pulleys, and cords in a machine for crushing the life out of society and transmitting the will of a single despot unresisted through its whole extent; for such is a faithful picture of what a well-governed community, as Hobbes conceived it, ought to be. During his second residence abroad he had become acquainted with the physical philosophy of Galileo—the theory that regards every change in the external or phenomenal world as a mere rearrangement of matter and motion, matter being an aggregate of independent molecules held together by mechanical pressure and impact. The component parts of this aggregate become known to us by the impressions their movements produce on our senses, traces of which

are preserved in memory, and subsequently recalled by association. Language consists of signs conventionally affixed to such images ; only the signs, standing as they do for all objects of a certain sort, have a universal value, not possessed by the original sensations, through which reasoning becomes possible. Hobbes had evidently fallen in love with algebra as well as with geometry ; and it is on the type of algebraic reasoning —in other words, on the type of rigorous deduction— that his logic is constructed. And such a view of the way in which knowledge advances seemed amply justified by the scientific triumphs of his age. But his principle that all motion originates in antecedent motion, although plausible in itself and occasionally revived by ingenious speculators, has not been verified by modern science. Gravitation, cohesion, and chemical affinity have, so far, to be accepted as facts not resoluble into more general facts. Hobbes died before the great discoveries of Newton which first turned away men's minds from the purely mechanical interpretation of energy.

That mechanical interpretation led our philosopher to reject Aristotle's notion of sociality as an essentially human characteristic. To him this seemed a mere occult quality, the substitution of a word for an explanation. The counter-view put forth in his great work, *Leviathan*, is commonly called atomistic. But it would be gross flattery to compare the ultimate elements of society, as Hobbes conceived them, to the molecules of modern science, which attract as well as repel each other ; or even with the Democritean atoms, which are at least neutral. According to him, the tendency to self-preservation, shared by men with all other beings, takes the form of an insatiable appetite

for power, leading each individual to pursue his own aggrandisement at the cost of any loss or suffering to the rest. And he tries to prove the permanence of this impulse by referring to the precautions against robbery taken by householders and travellers. Aristotle had much more justly mentioned the kindnesses shown to travellers as a proof of how widely goodwill is diffused. Our countryman, with all his acuteness, strangely ignores the necessity as a matter of prudence of going armed and locking the door at night, even if the robbers only amounted to one in a thousand of the population. Modern researches have shown that there are very primitive societies where the assumed war of all against each is unknown, predatory conflicts being a mark of more advanced civilisation, and the cause rather than the effect of anti-social impulses.

Granting an original state of anarchy and internecine hostility, there is, according to Hobbes, only one way out of it, which is a joint resolution of the whole community to surrender their rights of individual sovereignty into the hands of one man, who thenceforth becomes absolute ruler of the State, with authority to defend its citizens against mutual aggressions, and the whole community against attacks from a foreign Power. This agreement constitutes the famous Social Contract, of which so much was to be heard during the next century and a-half. It holds as between the citizens themselves, but not between the subjects and their sovereign, for that would be admitting a responsibility which there is no power to enforce. And anyone refusing to obey the sovereign justly forfeits his life ; for he thereby returns to the State of Nature, where any man that likes may kill his neighbour if he can.

All this theory of an original institution of the State

by contract impresses a modern reader as utterly unhistorical. But its value, if any, does not depend on its historical truth. Even if the remote ancestors of the seventeenth-century Europeans had surrendered all their individual rights, with certain trifling exceptions, into the hands of an autocrat, no sophistry could show that their mutual engagements were binding on the subjects of Charles I. and Louis XIV. And it is really on expediency, understood in the largest sense, that the claims of the New Monarchy are based by Hobbes. What he maintains is that nothing short of a despotic government exercised by one man can save society from relapsing into chaos. But even under this amended form the theory remains amenable to historical criticism. Had Hobbes pursued his studies beyond Thucydides, he would have found that other polities besides the Athenian democracy broke down at the hour of trial. Above all, Roman Imperialism, which seems to have been his ideal, failed to secure its subjects either against internal disorder or against foreign invasion.

Democracy, however, was not the sole or the worst enemy dreaded by the author of *Leviathan* as a competitor with his "mortal god." In the frontispiece of that work the deified monarch who holds the sword erect with his right hand grasps the crozier with his left, thus typifying the union of the spiritual and temporal powers in the same person. The publicists of the Italian Renaissance, with their classical ideals, had, indeed, been as anti-papal as the Protestants; and the political disorders fomented by the agents of the Catholic reaction during the last hundred years had given Hobbes an additional reason for perpetuating their point of view. Meanwhile another menace to

public order had presented itself from an opposite quarter. Calvinism had created a new spiritual power based on the free individual interpretation of Scripture, in close alliance with the alleged rights of conscience and with the spirit of republican liberty. Each creed in turn had attacked the Stuart monarchy, and the second had just effected its overthrow. Therefore, to save the State it was necessary that religious creeds, no less than codes of conduct, should be dictated by the secular authority, enslaving men's minds as well as their bodies.

By the dialectic irony of the speculative movement, this attempt to fetter opinion was turned into an instrument for its more complete emancipation. In order to discredit the pretensions of the religious zealots, Hobbes made a series of attacks on the foundations of their faith, mostly by way of suggestion and innuendo—no more being possible under the conditions then obtaining—but with such effect that, according to Macaulay, "for many years the *Leviathan* was the gospel of cold-blooded and hard-headed unbelievers." That one who made religious belief a matter to be fixed by legislation could be in any sense a Christian seems most unlikely. He professed, with what sincerity we know not, to regard the existence of God as something only a fool could deny. But his philosophy from beginning to end forms a rigorously-thought-out system of materialism which any atheist, if otherwise it satisfied him, might without inconsistency accept.

On the meeting of the Long Parliament, Hobbes again left England for the Continent, where he remained for eleven years. But his principles were no more to the taste of the exiled royalists than of

their opponents. He therefore returned once more to England, made his submission to the Parliament, and spent the rest of his days, practically unmolested by either party, under the Commonwealth and the Restoration until his death in 1679 at the age of ninety-one.

It may be said of Hobbes, as of Bacon, that the intellect at work is so amazing and the mass of literary performance so imposing that the illusions of historians about the value of their contributions to the progress of thought are excusable. Nevertheless, it cannot be too distinctly stated that the current or academic estimate of these great men as having effected a revolution in physical and moral science is wrong. They stand as much apart from the true line of evolution as do the gigantic saurians of a remote geological period whose remains excite our wonder in museums of natural history. Their systems proved as futile as the monarchies of Philip II. and of Louis XIV. Bacon's dreams are no more related to the coming victories of science than Raleigh's El Dorado was to the future colonial empire of Britain. Hobbes had better fortune than Strafford, in so far as he kept his head on his shoulders; but the logic of his absolutism shrivelled up under the sun of English liberty like the great Minister's policy of Thorough.

The theory of a Social Contract is a speculative idea of the highest practical importance. But the idea of contract as the foundation of morals goes back to Epicurus, and it is assumed in a more developed form by Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*. Its potency as a revolutionary instrument comes from the reinterpretations of Locke and Rousseau, which run directly counter to the assumptions of the *Leviathan*.

Hobbes shares with Bacon the belief that all knowledge comes from experience, besides making it clearer than his predecessor that experience of the world comes through external sense alone. Here also there can be no claim to originality, for more than one school of Greek philosophy had said the same. As an element of subsequent thought, more importance belongs to the idea of Power, which was to receive its full development from Spinoza; but only in association with other ideas derived from the philosopher whom we have next to examine, the founder of modern metaphysics, Descartes.

Chapter II.

THE METAPHYSICIANS

Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Leibniz.

René Descartes (1596–1650) was a Frenchman, born in Touraine, and belonging by family to the inferior nobility. Educated at the Jesuit college of La Flèche, he early acquired a distaste for the scholastic philosophy, or at least for its details ; the theology of scholasticism, as we shall see, left a deep impression on him through life. On leaving college he took up mathematics, varied by a short plunge into the dissipations of Paris. Some years of military service as a volunteer with the Catholic armies at the beginning of the Thirty Years' War enabled him to travel and see the world. Returning to Paris, he resumed his studies, but found them seriously interrupted by the tactless bores who, as we know from Molière's amusing comedy *Les Fâcheux*, long continued to infest French society. To escape their assiduities Descartes, who prized solitude before all things, fled the country. The inheritance of an independent income enabled the philosopher to live where he liked ; and Holland became, with a few interruptions, his chosen residence for the next twenty years (1629–49). Even here frequent changes of residence and occasional concealment of his address were necessary in order to elude the visits of importunate admirers. With all his unsociability there seems to have

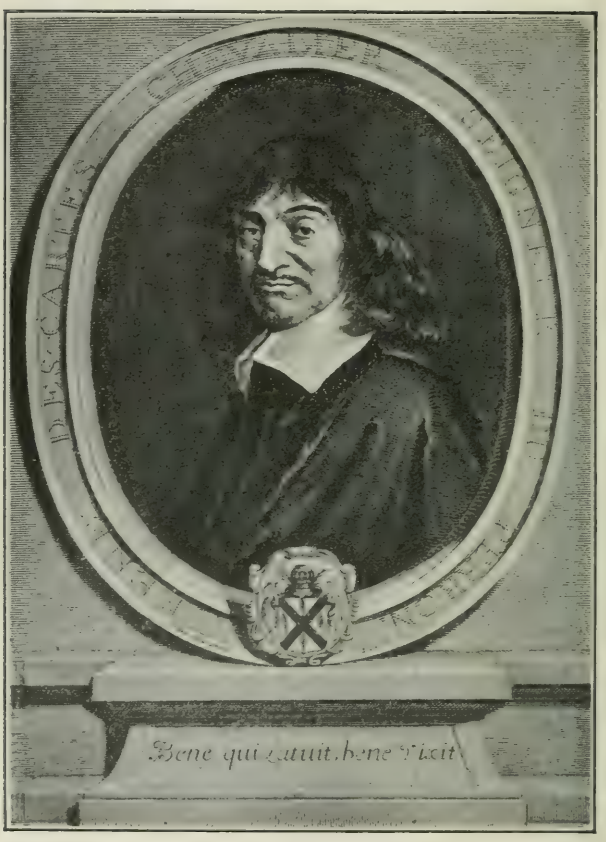
been something singularly magnetic about the personality of Descartes ; yet he only fell in with one congenial spirit, the Princess Elizabeth, daughter of the unfortunate Winter King and granddaughter of our James I. Possessing to the fullest extent the intellectual brilliancy and the incomparable charm of the Stuart family, this great lady impressed the lonely thinker as the only person who ever understood his philosophy.

Another royal friendship brought his career to an untimely end. Queen Christina of Sweden, the gifted and restless daughter of Gustavus Adolphus, heard of Descartes, and invited him to her Court. On his arrival she sent for the pilot who had brought the illustrious stranger to Stockholm and questioned him about his passenger. "Madame," he replied, "it is not a man whom I conducted to your Majesty, but a demi-god. He taught me more in three weeks of the science of seamanship and of winds and navigation than I had learned in the sixty years I had been at sea" (Miss E. S. Haldane's *Life of René Descartes*). The Queen fully came up to the expectations of her visitor, in whose eyes she had no fault but an unfortunate tendency to waste her time on learning Greek. Besides her other merits, she possessed "a sweetness and goodness which made men devoted to her service." It soon appeared that, as with others of the same rank, this was only the veneer of a heartless selfishness. Christina, who was an early riser, required his attendance in her library to give her lessons in philosophy at five o'clock in the morning. Descartes was by habit a very late riser. Besides, he had not even a lodging in the royal palace, but was staying at the French Embassy, and in going there "had to pass over a long bridge which was always bitterly cold." The cold

killed him. He had arrived at Stockholm in October, and meant to leave in January; but remained at the urgent request of the Queen, who, however, made no change in the hour of their interviews, although that winter was one of the severest on record. At the beginning of February, 1650, he fell ill and died of inflammation of the lungs on the 11th, in the fifty-fourth year of his age.

Descartes had the physical courage which Hobbes lacked; but he seems, like Bacon, to have been a moral coward. The most striking instance of this is that, on hearing of Galileo's condemnation for teaching the heliocentric astronomy, he withheld from publication and had even thoughts of destroying a work of his own in which the same doctrine was maintained. This was at a time when he was living in a country where there could be no question of personal danger from the Inquisition. But something of the same weakness shows itself in his running away from France to escape those intrusions on his studious retirement which one would think might have been checked by letting it be known with sufficient firmness that his hours could not be wasted on idle conversation. And we have seen how at last his life was lost for no better reason than the dread of giving offence to Queen Christina.

It seems strange that a character so unheroic should figure among the great emancipators of human thought. In fact, Descartes's services to liberty have been much exaggerated. His intellectual fame rests on three foundations. Of these the most indubitable is the creation of analytical geometry, the starting-point of modern mathematics. The value of his contributions to physics has been much disputed; but, on the whole, expert opinion seems to have decided that what was



René Descartes.

new in them was not true, and what was true was not new. However, the place we must assign Descartes in the history of philosophy can only be determined by our opinion of his metaphysics.

As a philosopher Descartes has, to begin with, the merit of exemplary clearness. The fault is not with him if we cannot tell what he thought and how he came to think it. The classic *Discourse on Method* (1637) relates his mental history in a style of almost touching simplicity. It appears that from an early age truth had been his paramount object, not as with Bacon and Hobbes for its utility, but for its own sake. In search of this ideal he read widely, but without finding what he wanted. The great and famous works of literature might entertain or dazzle; they could not convince. The philosophers professed to teach truth; their endless disputes showed that they had not found it. Mathematics, on the other hand, presented a pleasing picture of demonstrated certainty, but a certainty that seemed to be prized only as a sure foundation for the mechanical arts. Wearily throwing his books aside, the young man then applied himself to the great book of life, mingling with all sorts and conditions of men to hear what they had to say about the prime interests of existence. But the same vanity and vexation of spirit followed him here. Men were no more agreed among themselves than were the authorities of his college days. The truths of religion seemed, indeed, to offer a safe refuge; but they were an exception that proved the rule; being, as Descartes observes, a supernatural revelation, not the natural knowledge that he wanted.

The conflict of authorities had at least one good result, which was to discredit the very notion of

authority, thus throwing the inquirer back on his own reason as the sole remaining resource. And as mathematics seemed, so far, to be the only satisfactory science, the most reasonable course was to give a wider extension and application to the methods of algebra and geometry. Four fundamental rules were thus obtained: (1) To admit nothing as true that was not evidently so; (2) to analyse every problem into as many distinct questions as the nature of the subject required; (3) to ascend gradually from the simplest to the most complex subjects; and (4) to be sure that his enumerations and surveys were so exhaustive and complete as to let no essential element of the question escape.

The rules as they stand are ill-arranged, vague, and imperfect. The last should come first and the first last. The notions of simplicity, complexity, and truth are neither illustrated nor defined. And no pains are taken to discriminate judgments from concepts. It may be said that the method worked well; at least Descartes tells us that with the help of his rules he made rapid progress in the solution of mathematical problems. We may believe in his success without admitting that an inferior genius could have achieved the same results by the same means. The real point is to ascertain whether the method, whatever its utility in mathematics, could be advantageously applied to metaphysics. And the answer seems to be that as manipulated by its author the new system led to nothing but hopeless fallacies.

After reserving a provisional assent to the customs of the country where he happens to be residing and to the creed of the Roman Church, Descartes begins by calling in question the whole mass of beliefs he has

hitherto accepted, including the reality of the external world. But the very act of doubt implies the existence of the doubter himself. I think, therefore I am. It has been supposed that the initial affirmation of this self-evident principle implies that Descartes identified Being with Thought. He did no such thing. No more is meant, to begin with, than that, whatever else is or is not, I the thinker certainly am. This is no great discovery; the interesting thing is to find out what it implies. A good deal according to Descartes. First he infers that, since the act of thinking assures him of his existence, therefore he is a substance the whole essence of which consists in thought, which is independent of place and of any material object—in short, an immaterial soul, entirely distinct from the body, easier to know, and capable of existing without it. Here the confusion of conception with judgment is apparent, and it leads to a confusion of our thoughts about reality with the realities themselves. And Descartes carries this loose reasoning a step further by going on to argue that, as the certainty of his own existence has no other guarantee than the clearness with which it is inferred from the fact of his thinking, it must therefore be a safe rule to conclude that whatever things we conceive very clearly and distinctly are all true.

In his other great philosophical work, the *Meditations*, Descartes sets out at greater length, but with less clearness, his arguments for the immateriality of the soul. Here it is fully admitted that, besides thinking, self-consciousness covers the functions of perceiving, feeling, desiring, and willing; nor does it seem to be pretended that these experiences are reducible to forms of thought. But it is claimed that they depend on

thought in the sense that without thought one would not be aware of their existence ; whereas it can easily be conceived without them. A little more introspection would show that the second part of the assertion is not true ; for there is no thought without words, and no words, however inaudibly articulated, without a number of tactual and muscular sensations, nor even without a series of distinct volitions.

Another noticeable point is that, so far from obeying the methodical rule to proceed from the simple to the complex, Descartes does just the contrary. Starting with the whole complex content of consciousness, he works down by a series of arbitrary rejections to what, according to him, is the simple fact of immaterial thought. Let us see how it fares with his attempt to reconstruct knowledge on that elementary basis.

Returning to his postulate of universal doubt, our philosopher argues from this to an imperfection in his nature, and thence to the idea of a perfect being. The reasoning is most slipshod ; for, even admitting that knowledge is preferable to ignorance—which has not been proved—it does not follow that the dogmatist is more perfect than the doubter. Indeed, one might infer the contrary from Descartes's having passed with progressive reflection from the one stage to the other. Overlooking the paralogism, let us grant that he has the idea of a perfect being, and go on to the question of how he came to possess it. One might suggest that the consciousness of perfect self-knowledge, combined with the wish to know more of other subjects, would be sufficient to create an ideal of omniscience, and, proceeding in like manner from a comparison of wants with their satisfactions, to enlarge this ideal into the

notion of infinite perfection all round. Descartes, however, is not really out for truth—at least, not in metaphysics ; he is out for a justification of what the Jesuits had taught him at La Flèche, and no Jesuit casuistry could be more sophistical than the logic he finds good enough for the purpose. To argue, as he does, that the idea of a perfect being, in his mind, can be explained only by its proceeding from such a being as its creator is already sufficiently audacious. But this feat is far surpassed by his famous ontological proof of Theism. A triangle, he tells us, need not necessarily exist ; but, assuming there to be one, its three angles must be equal to two right angles. With God, on the other hand, to be conceived is to be ; for, existence being a perfection, it follows, from the idea of a perfect Being, that he must exist. The answer is more clear and distinct than any of Descartes's demonstrations. Perfection is affirmed of existing or of imaginary subjects, but existence is not a perfection in itself.

A third argument for Theism remains to be considered. Descartes asks how he came to exist. Not by his own act ; for on that hypothesis he would have given himself all the perfections that now he lacks ; nor from any other imperfect cause, for that would be to repeat the difficulty, not to solve it. Besides, the simple continuance of his existence from moment to moment needs an explanation. For time consists of an infinity of parts, none depending in any way on the others ; so that my having been a little while ago is no reason why I should be now, unless there is some power by which I am created anew. Here we must observe that Descartes is playing fast and loose with the law of causation. By what he calls the light of nature—in other words, the light of Greek philosophy

—things can no more pass into nothing than they can come out of it. Moreover, the difficulty is the same for my supposed Creator as for myself. We are told that thought is a necessary perfection of the divine nature. But thinking implies time; therefore God also exists from moment to moment. How, then, can he recover his being any more than we can? The answer, of course, would be: because he is perfect, and perfection involves existence. Thus the argument from causation throws us back on the so-called ontological argument, whose futility has already been shown.

This very idea of perfection involves us in fresh difficulties with the law of causation. A perfect Being might be expected to make perfect creatures—which by hypothesis we are not. Descartes quite sees this, and only escapes by a verbal quibble. Our imperfections, he says, come from the share that Nothingness has in our nature. Once allow so much to the creative power of zero, and God seems to be a rather gratuitous postulate.

After proving to his own satisfaction the existence of the soul and of God, Descartes returns to the starting-point of his whole inquiry—that is, the reality of the material world and of its laws. And now his theology supplies him with a short and easy method for getting rid of the sceptical doubts that had troubled him at first. He has a clear and distinct idea of his own body and of other bodies surrounding it on all sides as extended substances communicating movements to one another. And he has a tendency to accept whatever is clearly and distinctly conceived by him as true. But to suppose that God created that tendency with the intention of deceiving him would argue a want of veracity in the divine nature incompatible with its

perfection. Such reasoning obviously ignores the alternative that God might be deceiving us for our good. Or rather what we call truth might not be an insight into the nature of things in themselves, but a correct judgment of antecedents and consequents. Our consciousness would then be a vast sensori-motor machinery adjusted to secure the maintenance and perfection of life.

Descartes, as a mathematician, places the essence of Matter or Body in extension. Here he agrees with another mathematical philosopher, Plato, who says the same in his *Timæus*. So far the coincidence might be accidental; but when we find that the Frenchman, like the Greek, conceives his materialised space as being originally divided into triangular bodies, the evidence of unacknowledged borrowing seems irresistible—the more so that Huyghens mentions this as customary with Descartes.

The great author of the *Method* and the *Meditations* —for, after every critical deduction, his greatness as a thinker remains undoubted—contributed nothing to ethics. Here he is content to reaffirm the general conclusions of Greek philosophy, the necessary superiority of mind to matter, of the soul to the body, of spirit to sense. He accepts free-will from Aristotle without any attempt to reconcile it with the rigid determinism of his own mechanical naturalism. At the same time there is a remarkable anticipation of modern psychology in his doctrine of intellectual assent as an act of the will. When our judgments go beyond what is guaranteed by a clear and distinct perception of their truth there is a possibility of error, and then the error is our own fault, the precipitate conclusion having been a voluntary act. Thus human free-will intervenes to clear God of all

responsibility for our delusions as well as for our crimes.

Malebranche.

Pascal, we are told, could not forgive Descartes for limiting God's action on the world to the "initial fillip" by which the process of evolution was started. Nevertheless, Pascal's friends, the Jansenists, were content to adopt Cartesianism as their religious philosophy, and his epigram certainly does not apply to the next distinguished Cartesian, Arnold Geulincx (1625–1669), a Fleming of Antwerp. Unfortunate in his life, this eminent teacher has of all original thinkers received the least credit for his services to metaphysics from posterity, being, outside a small circle of students, still utterly unknown to fame. Geulincx is the author of a theory called Occasionalism. Descartes had represented mind, which he identified with Thought, and matter, which he identified with Extension, as two antithetical substances with not a note in common. Nevertheless, he supposed that communications between them took place through a part of the brain called the pineal body. Geulincx cut through even this narrow isthmus, denying the possibility of any machinery for transmitting sensible images from the material world to our consciousness, or volitions from the mind to the limbs. How, then, were the facts to be explained? According to him, by the intervention of God. When the so-called organs of sense are acted on by vibrations from the external world, or when a particular movement is willed by the mind, the corresponding mental and material modifications are miraculously produced by the exercise of his omnipotence; and it is because these events occur *on occasion* of signals of which they

are not the effects but the consequents that the theory has received the name of Occasionalism.

The theory, as Geulincx formulated it, seems at first sight simply grotesque ; and from a religious point of view it has the additional drawback of making God the immediate executor of every crime committed by man. Nevertheless, it is merely the logical application of a principle subsequently admitted by profound thinkers of the most opposing schools—namely, that consciousness cannot produce or transmit energy, combined with the belief in a God who does not exist for nothing. Even past the middle of the nineteenth century many English and French naturalists were persuaded that animal species to the number of 300,000 represented as many distinct creative acts ; and at least one astronomer, who was also a philosopher, declared that the ultimate atoms of matter, running up to an immeasurably higher figure, "bore the stamp of the manufactured article."

The capture of Cartesianism by theology was completed by Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715). This accomplished writer and thinker, dedicated by physical infirmity to a contemplative life, entered the Oratory at an early age, and remained in it until his death. Coming across a copy of Descartes's *Treatise on Man* at twenty-six, he at once became a convert to the new philosophy, and devoted the next ten years to its exclusive study. At the end of that period he published his masterpiece, *On the Investigation of Truth* (*De la Recherche de la Vérité*, 1674), which at once won him an enormous reputation. It was followed by other works of less importance. The legend that Malebranche's end was hastened by an argument with Berkeley has been disproved.

Without acknowledging the obligation, Malebranche accepts the conclusions of Geulincx to the extent of denying the possibility of any communication between mind and matter. Indeed, he goes further, and denies that one portion of matter can act on another. But his real advance on Occasionalism lies in the question: How, then, can we know the laws of the material universe, or even that there is such a thing as matter at all? Once more God intervenes to solve the difficulty, but after a fashion much less crude than the miraculous apparatus of Geulincx. Introspection assures us that we are thinking things, and that our minds are stored with ideas, including the idea of God the all-perfect Being, and the idea of Extension with all the mathematical and physical truths logically deducible therefrom. We did not make this idea, therefore it comes from God, was in God's mind before it was in ours. Following Plotinus, Malebranche calls this idea intelligible Extension. It is the archetype of our material world. The same is true of all other clear and distinct ideas; they are, as Platonism teaches, of divine origin. But is it necessary to suppose that the ideal contents of each separate soul were placed in it at birth by the Creator? Surely the law of parsimony forbids. It is a simpler and easier explanation to suppose that the divine archetypal ideas alone exists, and that we apprehend them by a mystical communion with the divine consciousness; that, in short, we see all things in God. And in order to make this vision possible we must, as the Apostle says, live, move, and have our being in God. As a mathematician would say, God must be the *locus*, the place of souls.

There is unquestionably something grandiose about this theory, which, however, has the defect in orthodox

opinion of logically leading to the Pantheism, held in abhorrence by Malebranche, of his greater contemporary Spinoza. And it is a suggestive circumstance that the very similar philosophy of the Eternal Consciousness held by our countryman T. H. Green has been shown by the criticism of Henry Sidgwick to exclude the personality of God.

Spinoza.

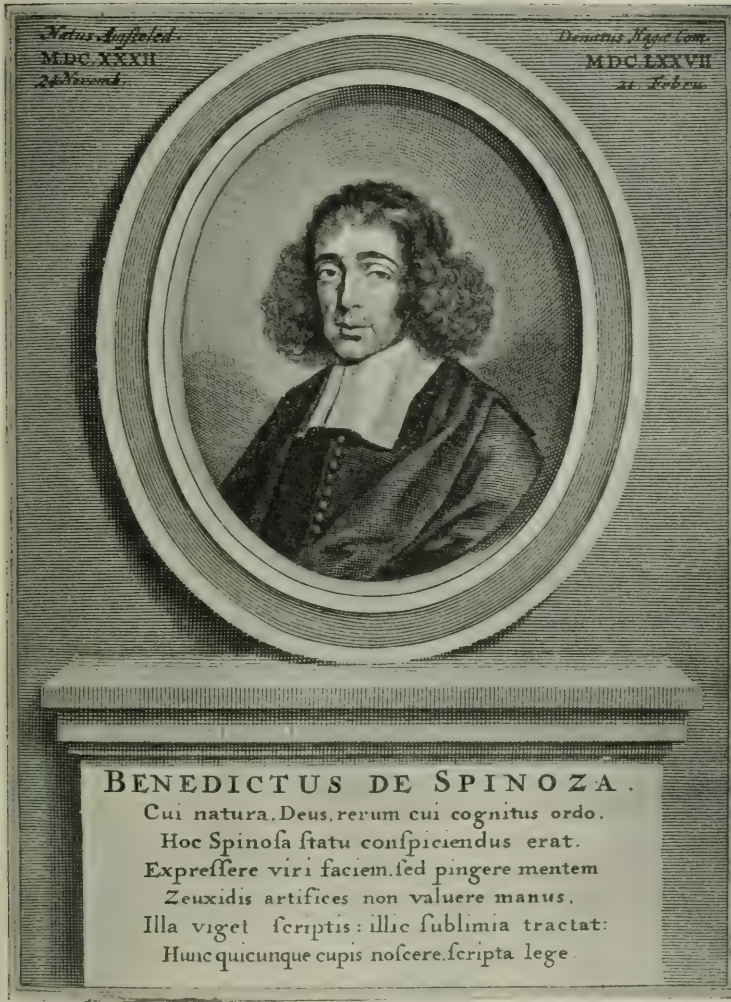
With the philosopher whom I have just named we come for the first time in modern history to a figure recalling in its sustained equality of intellectual and moral excellence the most heroic figures of Hellenic thought. Giordano Bruno we may, indeed, pronounce, like Lucan or Cranmer, "by his death approved," but his submission at Venice has to be set against his martyrdom at Rome; and if there is nothing very censurable in his career as a wandering teacher, there is also nothing worthy of any particular respect. Differences of environment and heredity may no doubt be invoked to account for the difference of character; and in the philosophy about to be considered the determining influence of such causes for the first time finds due recognition; but on the same principle our ethical judgments also are determined by the very constitution of things.

Baruch de Spinoza (1632–1677), born at Amsterdam, belonged to a family of Portuguese Jews, exiled on account of their Hebrew faith, in which also he was brought up. Soon after reaching manhood he fell away from the synagogue, preferring to share in the religious exercises of certain latitudinarian Christian sects. Spies were set to report his conversation, which soon supplied evidence of sufficiently heterodox opinions.

A sentence of formal excommunication followed; but modern research has discredited the story of an attempt to assassinate him made by an emissary of the synagogue. After successfully resisting the claim of his sister and his brother-in-law to shut out the apostate from his share of the paternal inheritance, Spinoza surrendered the disputed property, but henceforth broke off all communication with his family. Subsequently he refused an offer of 2,000 florins, made by a wealthy friend and admirer, Simon de Vries, as also a proposal from the same friend to leave him his whole fortune, insisting that it should go to the legal heir, Simon's brother Isaac. The latter, on succeeding, wished to settle an annual pension of 500 florins on Spinoza, but the philosopher would accept no more than 300. Books were his only luxury, material wants being supplied by polishing glass lenses, an art in which he attained considerable proficiency. But it was an unhealthy occupation, and probably contributed to his death by consumption.

Democracy was then and long afterwards associated with fanaticism and intolerance rather than with free-thought in religion. The liberal party in Dutch politics was the aristocratic party. Spinoza sympathised with its leader, John de Witt; he wept bitter tears over the great statesman's murder; and only the urgent remonstrances of his friends, who knew what danger would be incurred by such a step, prevented him from placarding the walls of the Hague, where he then resided, with an address reproaching the infuriated people for their crime.

In 1673 the enlightened ruler of the Palatinate, a brother of Descartes's Princess Elizabeth, offered Spinoza a professorship at Heidelberg, with full liberty



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to teach his philosophy. But the pantheistic recluse wisely refused it. Even at the present day such teaching as his would meet with little mercy at Berlin, Cambridge, or Edinburgh. As it was, we have reason to believe that even in free Holland only a premature death saved him from a prosecution for blasphemy, and his great work the *Ethica* could not with safety be published during his lifetime. It appeared anonymously among his posthumous works in November, 1677, without the name of the true place of publication on the title-page.

Spinoza was for his time no less daring as a Biblical critic than as a metaphysician. His celebrated *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* has for its primary purpose to vindicate the freedom of scientific thought against ecclesiastical interference. And this he does by drawing a trenchant line of demarcation between the respective offices of religion and of philosophy. The business of the one is to form the character and to purify the heart, of the other to guide and inform the intellect. When religion undertakes to teach scientific truth the very ends for which it exists are defeated. When theological dogmatism gains control of the Churches the worst passions are developed under its influence. Instead of becoming lowly and charitable, men become disturbers of public order, grasping intriguers, bitter and censorious persecutors. The claims of theology to dictate our intellectual beliefs are not only mischievous, but totally invalid. They rest on the authority of the Bible as a revelation of God's will. But no such supernatural revelation ever was or could be given. Such violation of the order of nature as the miracles recorded in Scripture history would be impossible. And the narratives recording them are discredited by

the criticism which shows that various books of the Old Testament were not written by the men whose names they bear, but long after their time. As a Hebrew scholar Spinoza discusses the Jewish Scriptures in some detail, showing in particular that the Pentateuch is of a later date than Moses. His limited knowledge of Greek is offered as a reason for not handling the New Testament with equal freedom; but some contradictions are indicated as disallowing the infallibility claimed for it. At the same time the perfection of Christ's character is fully acknowledged and accepted as a moral revelation of God.

Spinoza shared to the fullest extent, and even went beyond, Descartes's ambition to reconstruct philosophy on a mathematical basis. The idea may have come to him from the French thinker, but it is actually of much older origin, being derived from Plato, the leading spirit of the Renaissance, as Aristotle had been the oracle of the later Middle Ages. Now Plato's ideal had been to construct a philosophy transcending the assumptions—or, as he calls them, the hypotheses—of geometry as much as those assumptions transcend the demonstrations of geometry; and this also was the ideal of Spinoza. Descartes had been content to accept from tradition his ultimate realities, Thought, Extension, and God, without showing that they must necessarily exist; for his proof of God's existence starts from an idea in the human mind, while Thought and Extension are not deduced at all.

To appreciate the work of the Hebrew philosopher, of the lonely muser, bred in the religion of Jahveh—a name traditionally interpreted as the very expression of absolute self-existence—we must conceive him as starting with a question deeper even than the Cartesian

doubt, asking not How can I know what is? but Why should there *be* anything whatever? And the answer, divested of scholastic terminology, is: Because it is inconceivable that there should be nothing, and if there is anything there must be everything. This universe of things, which must also be everlasting, Spinoza calls God.

The philosophy or religion—for it is both—which identifies God with the totality of existence was of long standing in Greece, and had been elaborated in systematic detail by the Stoics. It has been known for the last two centuries under the name of Pantheism, a word of Greek etymology, but not a creation of the Greeks themselves, and, indeed, of more modern date than Spinoza. Historians always speak of him as a Pantheist, and there is no reason to think that he would have objected to the designation had it been current during his lifetime. But there are important points of distinction between him and those who preceded or followed him in the same speculative direction. The Stoics differed from him in being materialists. To them reality and corporeality were convertible terms. It seems likely that Hobbes and his contemporary, the atomist Gassendi, were of the same opinion, although they did not say it in so many words. But Descartes was a strong spiritualist; and Spinoza followed the master's lead so far, at any rate, as to give Thought at least equal reality with matter, which he also identified with Extension. It has been seen what difficulties were created by the radical Cartesian antithesis between Thought and Extension, or—to call them by their more familiar names—mind and body, when taken together with the intimate association shown by experience to obtain between them; and also how

Geulincx and Malebranche were led on by the very spirit of philosophy itself almost to submerge the two disparate substances in the all-absorbing agency of God. The obvious course, then, for Spinoza, being unfettered by the obligations of any Christian creed, was to take the last remaining step, to resolve the dualism of Thought and Extension into the unity of the divine substance.

In fact, the Hebrew philosopher does this, declaring boldly that Thought and Extension are one and the same thing—which thing is God, the only true reality of which they are merely appearances. And, so far, he has had many followers who strive to harmonise the opposition of what we now call subject and object in the synthesis of the All-One. But he goes beyond this, expanding the conception of God—or the Absolute—to a degree undreamed of by any religion or philosophy formulated before or after his time. God, Spinoza tells us, is "a Substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses his absolute and eternal essence." But of these attributes two alone, Thought and Extension, are known to us at present, so that our ignorance infinitely exceeds our knowledge of reality. His extant writings do not explain by what process he mounted to this, the most dizzy height of speculation ever attained by man ; but, in the absence of definite information, some guiding considerations suggest themselves as probable.

Bruno, whom Spinoza is held, on strong grounds, to have read, identified God with the supreme unifying principle of a universe extending through infinite space. Descartes, on the other hand, conceived God as a thinking rather than as an extended substance. But his school tended, as we saw, to conceive God as mediating

between mind and body in a way that suggested their real union through his power. Furthermore, the habit common to all Cartesians of regarding geometrical reasoning as the most perfect form of thought inevitably led to the conception of thought as accompanying space wherever it went—in fact, as stretching like it to infinity. Again, from the Cartesian point of view, that Extension which is the very essence of the material world, while it covers space, is more than mere space; it includes not only co-existence, but succession or time—that is, scientifically speaking, the eternal sequence of physical causes; or, theologically speaking, the creative activity of God. And reason or thought had also since Aristotle been more or less identified with the law of universal causation no less than with the laws of geometry.

Thus, then, the ground was prepared for Spinoza, as a pantheistic monist, to conceive God under the two attributes of Extension and Thought, each in its own way disclosing his essence as no other than infinite Power. But why should God have, or consist of, two attributes and no more? There is a good reason why *we* should know only those two. It is that we are ourselves modes of Thought united to modes of Extension, of which our thoughts are the revealing ideas. But it would be gross anthropomorphism to impose the limitations of our knowledge on the infinite being of God, manifested through those very attributes as unlimited Power. The infinite of co-existence, which is space, the infinite of causal procession, which is time, suggest an infinity of unimaginable but not inconceivable attributes of which the one divine substance consists. And here at last we get the explanation of why there should be such things as Thought and Extension at all. They are there simply because everything is. If I grant

anything — and I must, at least, grant myself — I grant existence, which, having nothing outside itself, must fill up all the possibilities of being which only exclude the self-contradictory from their domain. Thus, the philosophy of Spinoza neither obliges him to believe in the monsters of mythology nor in the miracles of Scripture, nor in the dogmas of Catholic theology, nor even in free-will; nor, again, would it oblige him to reject by anticipation the marvels of modern science. For, according to him, the impossibility of really incredible things could be deduced with the certainty of mathematical demonstration from the law of contradiction itself.

Hegel has given the name of acosmism, or negation of the world, to this form of pantheism, interpreting it as a doctrine that absorbs all concrete reality and individuality in the absolute unity of the divine essence. No misconception could be more complete. Differentiation is the very soul of Spinoza's system. It is, indeed, more open to the charge of excessive dispersion than of excessive centralisation. Power, which is God's essence, means no more than the realisation through all eternity of all possibilities of existence, with no end or aim but just the process of infinite production itself. There is, indeed, a nominal identification between the material processes of Extension and the ideal processes of Thought. But this amounts to no more than a re-statement in abstract terms of the empirical truth that there is a close connection between body and mind. Like the double-aspect theory, the parallelistic theory, the materialistic theory, the theory of interaction, and the theory of more or less complete reciprocal independence, it is a mere verbalism, telling us nothing that we did not know before. Or, if there

is more, it consists of the very questionable assumption that body and mind must come in somewhere to fill up what would otherwise be blank possibilities of existence. And this, like other metaphysical assumptions, is an illegitimate generalisation from experience. The ideas of space and time as filled-up *continua* supply the model on which the whole universe must be constructed. Like them, it must be infinite and eternal, but, so to speak, at a higher power ; as in them, every part must be determined by the position of all other parts, with the determination put at a logical instead of at a descriptive value ; corresponding to their infinitely varied differentiation of position and quantity, there must be an infinite differentiation of concrete content ; and, finally, the laws of the universe must be demonstrable by the same *à priori* mathematical method that has been so successfully applied to continuous quantity.

The geometrical form into which Spinoza has thrown his philosophy unfortunately restricts the number of readers—always rather small—that it might otherwise attract. People feel themselves mystified, wearied, and cheated by the appearance, without the reality, of logical demonstration ; and the repulsion is aggravated by the barbarous scholasticism with which — unlike Bacon, Hobbes, and Descartes—he peppers his pages. Yet, like the Greek philosophers, he is much more modern, more on the true line of developing thought than they are. But to get at the true kernel of his teaching we must, like Goethe, disregard the logical husks in which it is wrapped up. And, as it happens, Spinoza has greatly facilitated this operation by printing his most interesting and suggestive discussions in the form of Scholia, Explanations, and Appendices. Even

these are not easy reading; but, to quote his own pathetic words, "If the way of salvation lay ready to hand, and could be found without great toil, would it be neglected by nearly everyone? But all glorious things are as difficult as they are rare."

Some of his expositors have called Spinoza a mystic; and his philosophy has been traced, in part at least, to the mystical pantheism of certain medieval Jews. In my opinion this is a mistake; and I will now proceed to show that the phrases on which it rests are open to an interpretation more consistent with the rational foundations of the whole system.

The things that have done most to fasten the character of a mystic on Spinoza are his identification of virtue with the knowledge and love of God, and his theory—so suggestive of Christian theology at its highest flight—that God loves himself with an infinite love. That, like Plato and Matthew Arnold, he should value religion as a means of popular moralisation might seem natural enough; but not, except from a mystical motive, that he should apparently value morality merely as a help to the religious life. On examination, however, it appears that the beatific vision of this pantheist offers no experience going beyond the limits of nature and reason. Since God and the universe are one, to know God is to know that we are, body and soul, necessary modes of the two attributes, Extension and Thought, by which the infinite Power which is the essence of the universe expresses itself for us. To love God is to recognise our own vitality as a portion of that power, welcoming it with grateful joy as a gift from the universe whence we come. And to say that God loves himself with an infinite love is merely to say that the attribute of Thought eternally divides itself among an infinity of

thinking beings, through whose activity the universe keeps up a delighted consciousness of itself.

Spinoza declares by the very name of his great work that for him the philosophical problem is essentially a problem of ethics, being, indeed, no other than the old question, first started by Plato, how to reconcile disinterestedness with self-interest; and his metaphysical system is really an elaborate mechanism for proving that, on the profoundest interpretation, their claims coincide. His great contemporary, Hobbes, had taught that the fundamental impulse of human nature is the will for power; and Spinoza accepts this idea to the fullest extent in proclaiming Power to be the very stuff of which we and all other things are made. But he parts company with the English philosopher in his theory of what it means. On his view it is an utter illusion to suppose that to gratify such passions as pride, avarice, vanity, and lust is to acquire or exercise power. For strength means freedom, self-determination; and no man can be free whose happiness depends on a fortuitous combination of external circumstances, or on the consent of other persons whose desires are such as to set up a conflict between his gratification and theirs. Real power means self-realisation, the exercise of that faculty which is most purely human—that is to say, of Thought under the form of reason.

In pleading for the subordination of the self-seeking desires to reason Spinoza repeats the lessons of moral philosophy in all ages and countries since its first independent constitution. In connecting the interests of morality with the interests of science as such, he follows the tradition of Athenian thought. In interpreting pantheism as an ethical enthusiasm of the universe he returns to the creed of Stoicism, and

strikes the keynote of Wordsworth's loftiest poetry. In fixing each man's place in nature as one among the infinite individuations of divine power he repeats another Stoic idea—with this difference, however, that among the Stoics it was intimately associated with their teleology, with the doctrine that everything in nature has a function without whose performance the universe would not be complete; whereas Spinoza, following Bacon and Descartes, utterly abjures final causes as an anthropomorphism, an intrusion of human interests into a universe whose sole perfection is to exhaust the possibilities of existence. And herein lies his justification of evil which the Stoics could only defend on æsthetic grounds as enhancing the beauty of moral heroism by contrast and conflict. "If I am asked," he says, "why God did not create all men of such a character as to be guided by reason alone, my answer is because he had materials enough to create all things from the highest to the lowest degree of perfection." Perfection with him meaning reality, this account of evil—and of error also—points to the theory of degrees of reality, revived and elaborated in our own time by Mr. F. H. Bradley, involving a correlative theory of illusion. Now, the idea of illusion, although older than Plato, was first applied on a great scale in Plato's philosophy, of whose influence on seventeenth-century thought this is not the only example. We shall find it to some extent countervailed by a revived Aristotelian current in the work of the metaphysician who now remains to be considered.

Leibniz.

G. W. Leibniz (1646–1716), son of a professor at the University of Leipzig, is marked by some of the distinguishing intellectual characters of the German genius.

Far more truly than Francis Bacon, this man took all knowledge for his province. At once a mathematician, a physicist, a historian, a metaphysician, and a diplomatist, he went to the bottom of whatever subject he touched, and enriched all his multifarious studies with new views or with new facts. And as with other great countrymen of his, the final end of all this curiosity and interest was to combine and reconcile. One of his ambitions was to create a universal language of philosophy, by whose means its problems were to be made a matter of mathematical demonstration; another to harmonise ancient with modern speculation; a third—the most chimerical of all—to compose the differences between Rome and Protestantism; a fourth—partly realised long after his time—to unite the German Calvinists with the Lutherans. In politics he tried, with equal unsuccess, to build up a Confederation of the Rhine as a barrier against Louis XIV., and to divert the ambition of Louis himself from encroachments on his neighbours to the conquest of Egypt.

It seems probable that no intellect of equal power was ever applied in modern times to the service of philosophy. And this power is demonstrated, not, as with other metaphysicians, by constructions of more or less contestable value, however dazzling the ingenuity they may display, but by contributions of the first order to positive science. It is now agreed that Leibniz discovered the differential calculus independently of Newton; and, what is more, that the formulation by which alone it has been made available for fruitful application was his exclusive invention. In physics he is a pioneer of the conservation of energy. In geology he starts the theory that our planet began as a glowing molten mass derived from the sun; and the modern

theory of evolution is a special application of his theory of development.

Intellect alone, however, does not make a great philosopher; character also is required; and Leibniz's character was quite unworthy of his genius. Ambitious and avaricious, a courtier and a time-server, he neither made truth for its own sake a paramount object, nor would he keep on terms with those who cherished a nobler ideal. After cultivating Spinoza's acquaintance, he joined in the cry of obloquy raised after his death, and was mean enough to stir up religious prejudice against Newton's theory of gravitation. Of the calamity that embittered his closing days we may say with confidence that it could not possibly have befallen Spinoza. On the accession of the Elector of Hanover to the English crown as George I., Leibniz sought for an invitation to the Court of St. James. Apparently the prince had not found him very satisfactory as a State official, and had reason to believe that Leibniz would have liked to exchange his office of historiographer at Hanover for a better appointment at Vienna. Greatness in other departments could not recommend one whom he knew only as a negligent and perhaps unfaithful servant to the favour of such an illiterate master. Anyhow, the English appointment was withheld, and the worn-out encyclopædist succumbed to disease and vexation combined. The only mourner at his funeral was his secretary, Eckhardt, who hastened to solicit the reversion of the offices left vacant by his chief's decease.

A single theory of Leibniz has attained more celebrity than any one utterance of any other philosopher; but that fame is due to the undying fire in which it has been enveloped by the mocking irony of Voltaire.

Everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. Such is the famous text as a satire on which *Candide* was composed. Yet whatever value Voltaire's objections to optimism may possess tells nearly as much against Voltaire himself as against his unfortunate butt. For, after all, believing as he did in a God who combined omnipotence with perfect goodness he could not any more than Leibniz evade the obligation of reconciling the divine character with the divine work. On *à priori* grounds the German philosopher seems to have an incontrovertible case. A perfect Being must have made the best possible world. The only question is what we mean by goodness and by possibility. Spinoza had solved the problem by identifying goodness with existence. It is enough that the things we call evil are possible; the infinite Power of nature would be a self-contradiction were they not realised. Leibniz rejects the pantheistic position in terms, but nearly admits it in practice. Evil for him means imperfection, and if God made a world at all it was bound to be imperfect. The next step was to call pain an imperfection, which suggests a serious logical deficiency in the optimist; for, although in certain circumstances the production of pain argues imperfection in the operator, we are not entitled to argue that wherever there is pain there must be imperfection. Another plea is the necessity of pain as a punishment for crime, or, more generally, as a result of moral freedom. Such an argument is only open to the believers in free-will. A world of free and responsible agents, they urge, is infinitely more valuable than a world of automata; and it is not too dearly purchased even at the cost of such suffering as we witness. The argument is not very convincing; for liberty of choice

in a painless world is quite conceivable. But, be it a good or bad argument, although it might appeal to Voltaire, who believed in free-will, it could not decently be used by Leibniz, who was a determinist of the strictest type. To make this clear we must now turn to his metaphysical system.

Bacon, Descartes, and Spinoza, disagreeing widely on other subjects, were agreed in discountenancing the study of final causes: Bacon, apparently, from dislike of the idea that the perfect adaptation of all things to the service of man rendered superfluous any efforts to make them more serviceable still; Descartes from his devotion to the mathematical method which was more applicable to a system of mechanical causation; Spinoza for the same reason, and also from his disbelief in a personal God. Leibniz, on the contrary, felt deeply impressed by a famous passage in Plato's *Phædo*, where Socrates, opposing the philosophy of teleology to the philosophy of mechanism, desiderates an explanation of nature as designed with a view to the highest good. But Leibniz did not go so far as Plato. Mediating between the two methods, he taught that all is done for the best, but also that all is done through an unbroken series of efficient causes. At the same time, these causes are only material in appearance; in reality they are spiritual beings. There is no such thing as dead matter; the universe consists of living forces all through. The general idea of force probably came from that infinite Power of which, according to Spinoza, the whole universe is at once the product and the expression; or it may have been suggested by Plato's incidental identification of Being with Action. But Leibniz found his type of force in human personality, which, following the lead of Aristotle

rather than of Plato, he conceived as an Entelechy, or realised Actuality, and a First Substance. After years of anxious reflection he chose the far happier name of Monad, a term originally coined by Bruno, but not, as would appear, directly borrowed from him by the German metaphysician.

According to Leibniz, the monads or ultimate elements of existence are constituted by the two essential properties of psychic life, perception and appetency. In this connection two points have to be made clear. What he calls bare monads—*i.e.*, the components of what is known as inorganic matter—although percipient, are not conscious of their perceptions; in his language they do not *apperceive*. And he endeavours to prove that such a mentality is possible by a reference to our own experience. We hear the roaring of waves on the seashore, but we do not hear the sound made by the falling of each particle of water. And yet we certainly must perceive it in some way or other, since the total volume of sound is made up of those inaudible impacts. He overlooks the conceivable alternative that the immediate antecedent of our auditory sensations is a cerebral disturbance, and that this must attain a certain volume in order to produce an effect on our consciousness. The other point is that the appetency of a monad does not mean an active impulse, but a search for more and more perceptions, a continuous widening of its cognitive range. In short, each monad is a little Leibniz for ever increasing the sum of its knowledge.

At no stage does that knowledge come from experience. The monad has no windows, no communication of any kind with the external world. But each reflects the whole universe, knowing what it knows by

mere introspection. And each reflects all the others at a different angle, the angles varying from one another by infinitesimal degrees, so that in their totality they form a continuous series of differentiated individuals. And the same law of infinitesimal differentiation is observed by the series of progressive changes through which the monads are ever passing, so that they keep exact step, the continuity of existence being unbroken in the order of succession as in the order of co-existence. Evidently there is no place for free-will in such a system; and that Leibniz, with his relentless fatalism, should not only admit the eternal punishment of predestined sinners, but even defend it as morally appropriate, obliges us to condemn his theology as utterly irrational or utterly insincere.

In this system animal and human souls are conceived as monads of superior rank occupying a central and commanding position among a multitude of inferior monads constituting what we call their bodies, and changing *pari passu* with them, the correspondence of their respective states being, according to Leibniz, of such a peculiarly intimate character that the phenomena of sensation and volition seem to result from a causal reaction instead of from a mechanical adjustment such as we can imagine to exist between two clocks so constructed and set as to strike the same hour at the same time. This theory of the relations between body and soul is known to philosophy as the system of pre-established harmony.

It may be asked how every monad can possibly reflect every other monad when we do not know what is passing in our own bodies, still less what is passing all over the universe. The answer consists in a convenient distinction between clear and confused

perceptions, the one constituting our actual and the other our potential knowledge. A more difficult problem is to explain how any particular monad—Leibniz or another—can consistently be a monadologist rather than a solipsist believing only in its own existence. Here, as usual, the *Deus ex Machina* comes in. Following Descartes, I think of God as a perfect Being whose idea involves his existence, with, of course, the power, will, and wisdom to create the best possible world—a universe of monads—which, again, by its perfect mutual adjustments, proves that there is a God. A more serious, and indeed absolutely insuperable, objection arises from the definition of the monads as nothing but mutually reflecting entities. For even an infinity of little mirrors with nothing but each other to reflect must at once collapse into absolute vacuity. And with their disappearance their creator also disappears. God, the supreme monad, we are told, has only clear perceptions; but the clearness is of no avail when he has nothing to perceive but an absolute blank. Leibniz rejected the objectivity of time and space; yet the hollow infinity of those blank forms seems, in his philosophy, to have reached the consciousness of itself.

Chapter III.

THE THEORISTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant.

Epistemology, or theory of knowledge, did not begin in modern times. Among the Greeks it goes back, at least, to Empedocles, and figures largely in the programmes of the later schools. And Descartes's universal doubt seems to give the question, How can we be sure of anything? a foremost place in speculation. But the singular assurance with which the Cartesian metaphysicians presented their adventurous hypotheses as demonstrated certainties showed that with them the test of truth meant whatever told for that which, on other grounds, they believed to be true. In reality, the thing they called reason was hardly more than a covert appeal to authority, a suggestion that the duty of philosophy was to reconcile old beliefs with new. And the last great dogmatist, Leibniz, was the one who practised this method of uncritical assumption to the utmost extent.

Locke.

It is the peculiar glory of John Locke (1632–1704) to have resumed that method of doubt which Descartes had attempted, but which his dogmatic prepossessions had falsified almost at the first start. This illustrious thinker is memorable not only for his services to speculation, but for the example of a genuinely philosophic life

entirely devoted to truth and good—a character in which personal sweetness, simplicity, and charm were combined with strenuous, disinterested, and fearless devotion to the service of the State. Locke was a Whig when Whiggism meant advanced Liberalism in religion and politics, and when *that* often meant a choice between exile and death. Thus, after the fall of his patron, Lord Shaftesbury, the philosopher had to take refuge in Holland, remaining there for some years, lying hid even there for some time to escape an extradition order for which the Government of James II. had applied. It was in Holland that he wrote the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.

This revolutionist in thought was no solitary recluse, but, in the best sense, a thorough man of the world. Educated at Westminster and Christ Church, he had, in the German poet's phrase, the supreme happiness of combining the seriousness of an enthusiast with the sagacity of a statesman, so that great statesmen recognised him as one of themselves. With the triumph of the Whig cause at a time when diplomacy demanded the utmost tact and skill, it was proposed to send Locke as Ambassador to the Court of Brandenburg, and, as that would not have suited his sober habits, to the Court of Vienna. Weak health obliging him to decline this also, he received office in the Ministry at home, taking a department where business talents were eminently required. In that capacity he bore a leading part in the restoration of the coinage, besides inspiring the Toleration Act and the Act for Unlicensed Printing. Even the wisest men make mistakes ; and it must be noticed with regret that Locke's theory of toleration excluded Roman Catholics on the one side and atheists on the other—the former because their

creed made persecution a duty, the latter because their want of a creed left them no sanction for any duties whatever. To say that Locke had not our experience does not excuse him, for in both cases the expediency of toleration can be proved *à priori*. Romanists must be expected to suppress a heresy whose spokesman declares that when he has the power he will suppress their Church; and, if atheists are without moral principle, they will propagate, under cover of orthodoxy, negations that they are not allowed openly to profess.

Locke was brought up by a Puritan father; and, although in after life he wandered far from its doctrinal standards, he no doubt always retained a sense of that close connection between religion and morality which Puritanism implies. Telling about the train of thought that started his great Essay, he refers it to a conversation between himself and some friends, in which they "found themselves quickly at a stand by the difficulties that rose on every side;" and, according to an intimate friend of his, the discussion turned "on the principles of morality and revealed religion." It then occurred to him that they should first ascertain "what objects their understandings were or were not fitted to deal with." And the mottoes prefixed to the essay prove that the results were of a decidedly sceptical cast. Indeed, his successors, though not himself, were destined to develop them into what is now called Agnosticism.

We have further to note that, while his Continental rivals were mathematicians, our English philosopher never went deeply into mathematics, but was by calling a physician. In this he resembles Aristotle and Sextus Empiricus among the Greeks; and so it is quite in order that, with the same sort of training, he should

adopt Aristotle's method of experience as against Platonic transcendentalism, and the sceptical relativism of Sextus as against the dogmatism of the schools.

Locke begins his essay with a vigorous polemic against the doctrine of Innate Ideas. The word "idea," as he uses it, is ambiguous, serving to denote perceptions, notions, and propositions; but this confusion is of no practical importance, his object being to show that all our knowledge originates in experience; whereas the reigning belief was that at least the first principles of knowledge had a more authoritative, if not a mystical, source. Hobbes had been beforehand with him in deriving every kind of knowledge from experience, but had been content to assume his case; whereas Locke supports his by a formidable array of proofs. The gist of his argument is that intellectual and moral principles supposed to be recognised by all mankind from their infancy are admitted only by some, and by those only as the result of teaching.

As we saw, the whole inquiry began with questions about religion and morality; and it is precisely in reference to the alleged universality and innateness of the belief in God and the moral law that Locke is most successful. And the more modern anthropology teaches us about primitive man, the stronger becomes the case against the transcendental side in the controversy. Where his analysis breaks down is in dealing with the difficult and important ideas of Space, Time, Substance, and Causality—with the fatal result that such questions as, How is experience itself possible? or, How from a partial experience can we draw universal and necessary conclusions? find no place in his theory of knowledge. Of course, his contemporaries are open to the same

criticism—nor, indeed, had the time come even for the statement of such problems. Meanwhile, the facility with which the founder of epistemology accepts fallacies whence Spinoza had already found his way out shows how little he was master of his means. According to Locke, it is "a certain and evident truth that there is an eternal, most powerful, and most knowing being, which whether anyone will please to call God it matters not." On examination the proof appears to involve two unproved assumptions. The first is that nothing can begin to exist without a cause. The second is that effects must resemble their causes. And from these it is inferred that an all-powerful being must have existed from all eternity. The alternative is overlooked that a succession of more limited beings would answer the purpose equally well, while it would also be more consistent with our experience. But a far more fatal objection to Locke's theism results from his second assumption. This, although not explicitly stated, is involved in the assertion that for knowledge such as we possess to originate from things without knowledge is impossible. For, on the same principle, matter must have been made by something material, pain by something that is pained, and evil by something that is evil. It would not even be going too far to say that by this logic I myself must have existed from all eternity ; for to say that I was created by a not-myself would be to say that something may come from nothing.

We have seen how Locke refused toleration to atheists on the ground that their denial of a divine lawgiver and judge destroys the basis of morality. He did not, like Spinoza, believe that morality is of the nature of things. For him it is constituted by the will of God. Possibly, if pressed, he might have explained

that what atheism denies is not the rule of right, but the sanction of that rule, the fear of supernatural retribution. Yet being, like Spinoza and Leibniz, a determinist, he should have seen that a creator who sets in motion the train of causes and effects necessarily resulting in what we call good or bad human actions has the same responsibility for those actions as if he had committed them himself. To reward one of his passive agents and to punish another would be grossly unjust and at the same time perfectly useless. But how do we know that he will, on any theory of volition, reward the good and punish the bad? "Because we have his word for it." And how do we know that he will keep his word? "Because he is all-good." But that, on Locke's principles, is pure assumption; and God, being quite sure that *he* has no retribution to fear, must be even more irresponsible than the atheist.

The principle that nothing can come from nothing, so far from proving theism, leads logically either to pantheism or to a much more thorough monadism than the system of Leibniz. And, metaphysics apart, it conflicts with a leading doctrine of the essay—that is the fundamental distinction between the primary and the secondary qualities of matter. We think of bodies as in themselves extended, resisting and mobile, but not in themselves as coloured, sonorous, odorous, hot, cold, or sapid. They cause our special sensations, but cause them by an unknown power. Again we perceive—or think we perceive—both primary and secondary qualities in close union as properties of a single object, and this object in which they jointly inhere is called a substance. And to the question, What is substance? Locke admits that he has no answer except something we know not what. He has returned to the agnostic standpoint of the

Cyrenaic school. This something, for aught we know, might have created the world.

Continental historians regard the whole rationalistic movement of the eighteenth century, or what in Germany is called the Enlightenment (Aufklärung), as having been started by Locke. But the sort of arguments that he adduces for the existence of a God prove that in theology at least his rationalism had rather narrow limits. Both his theism and his acceptance of Christianity on the evidence of prophecy and miracles show no advance on medieval logic. In this respect Spinoza and Bayle (1622–1709) were far more in line with the modern movement. Still, assuming scripture as an authoritative revelation, Locke shows that, rationally interpreted, it yields much less support to dogmatic orthodoxy than English Churchmen supposed. And whatever may have been the letter of his religious teaching, there can be little doubt that the English Deists, Toland, Shaftesbury, and Anthony Collins, represented its true spirit more faithfully than the philosopher himself.

Representative government and the subordination of ecclesiastical to secular authority—or, better still, their separation—are both good things in themselves and favourable conditions to the life of reason. Another condition is that children should be trained to exercise their intelligence instead of relying blindly on authority. In these respects also Locke's writings acted powerfully on the public opinion of the next century, especially through the agency of French writers; France, as Macaulay justly claims, being the interpreter between England and the world. Our present business, however, is not with the diffusion but the development of thought, and to trace this we must return to British philosophy.

Berkeley.

George Berkeley (1684–1753) was born and educated in Ireland. The fact is of no racial or national importance, but interests us as accounting for his having received a better training in philosophy than at that time was possible in England. For the study of Locke, then proscribed at Oxford, had already been introduced into Dublin when Berkeley was an undergraduate there; and it was as a critical advance on Locke that his first publication, the *New Theory of Vision* (1709), was offered. Next year came the epoch-making *Principles of Human Knowledge*, followed in 1713 by the more popular *Dialogues*. At twenty-nine his work was done, and although he lived forty years longer, rising to be a Bishop in the Irish Church, after projecting a Christian Utopia for the civilisation of the North American Indians that never came to anything, and practising "every virtue under heaven," he made no other permanent contribution to thought.

Berkeley is at once a theorist of knowledge and a metaphysician, combining, in a way, the method of Locke with the method of Descartes and his successors. The popular notion of his philosophy is that it resolved the external world into a dream, or at least into something that has no existence outside our minds. But this is an utter misconception, against which Berkeley constantly protested. His quarrel was not with common sense, but with the theorists of perception. To understand this we must return for a moment to Locke's teaching. It will be remembered in what a tangle of difficulties the essay had left its author. Matter had two sets of qualities, primary and secondary, the one belonging to things in themselves, the other existing only

in our minds; yet both somehow combined in real substances independent of us, but acting on our senses. Substance as such is an unknown and unknowable postulate; nevertheless, we know that it was created by God, of whom our knowledge is, if anything, inconveniently extensive. Now Berkeley, to find his way out of these perplexities, begins by attacking the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. For this purpose his *Theory of Vision* was written. It proves—or attempts to prove—that extension is not a real attribute of things in themselves, but an intellectual construction, or what Locke would have called an "idea of reflection." Till then people had thought that its objectivity was firmly established by the concurrent testimony of two senses, sight and touch. Berkeley shows, on the contrary, that visible and tangible extension are not the same thing, that the sensations—or, as he calls them, the ideas—of sight and touch are two different languages whose words we learn by experience to interpret in terms of each other without their being necessarily connected. A man born blind would not at first sight know how to interpret the visual signs of distance, direction, and magnitude; he would have to learn them by experience. These, in fact, are ideal relations only existing in the mind; and so we have no right to oppose mind as inextended to an extended or an external world.

Having thus cleared the ground, our young idealist proceeds in his next and greatest work, *Of the Principles of Human Knowledge*, to attack the problem from another side. The world of objects revealed through sensation and reflection is clearly no illusion, no creation of our own. We find it there, changing, when it changes, without or even very much against our will.

What, then, is its origin and nature? Locke's view, which is the common view, tells us that it consists of material bodies, some animated and some not. And matter, the supposed substance of body, is made known to us by impressions on our organs of sense. But when we try to think of matter apart from these sensible qualities and the relations between them it vanishes into an empty abstraction. Now, according to Berkeley there are no abstract ideas—*i.e.*, no thoughts unassociated with some mental image besides a mere word; and Matter or inanimate substance would be such an idea, therefore it does not exist. There is nothing but mind and its contents—what we call states of consciousness, what Locke and Berkeley called ideas. Whence, then, come the objects of our consciousness, and whither do they go when we cease to perceive them? At this point the new metaphysical system intervenes. Berkeley says that all things subsist in the consciousness of God, and by their subsistence his existence is proved. The direct apprehension of a reality that is not ourselves only becomes possible through what would be called in modern language a subjective participation in the divine consciousness, more feebly reflected, as would seem, in the memories, imaginations, and reasonings of our finite minds.

In pursuing these wonderful speculations Berkeley deviated widely from the direct line of English philosophy, and it is difficult not to believe that the deflection was determined by the influence of Malebranche, especially when we find that the writings of the Oratorian Father were included in his college studies. Moreover, a parallel line of idealistic development derived from the same source was evolving itself at

the same time in English thought. John Norris (1657–1711), a correspondent of the Platonist Henry More, an opponent of Locke, and a disciple of Malebranche, had himself found an enthusiastic admirer in Arthur Collier (1680–1732), whose *Clavis Universalis* professed to be "a demonstration of the *non-existence or impossibility of an external world*" (1713). Both Norris and Collier, like Malebranche and Berkeley, were Churchmen; but so strong was the drift towards idealism that Leibniz, a layman and a man of science, contributed by his Monadology to the same current. Malebranche neither was nor could he be a complete idealist in the sense of denying the reality of matter; for the dogma of transubstantiation bound him, as a Catholic, to its acceptance, while Berkeley, Collier, and Leibniz, as Protestants, were under no such obligation. His idealism agreed more nearly with the Neo-Platonic doctrine of Archetypes in the divine Reason among which Matter was one. On the other hand, Berkeley probably borrowed from him the notion of a direct contact with God, the difference being that with the Cartesian it is conceived as an objective vision, with Locke's disciple as (if the expression may be permitted) a subjective con-consciousness. Leibniz, again, while abolishing Matter, retains an external world composed indeed of spirits and so far immaterial, but existing independently of God.

All these systems involve the negation of two fundamental scientific principles. The first is that every change must be explained by reference to an antecedent change to which it bears a strict quantitative relation. The second is that no particular change can be referred to another change as its necessary antecedent unless it can be shown by experience that a precisely similar

couple of changes are, in fact, always so connected. Let me illustrate these principles by an example. I leave a kettle full of cold water on the fire, and on returning after a sufficient interval of time I find the water boiling. Had I stayed by the fire and watched the process, my kettle would—a popular proverb to the contrary notwithstanding—have certainly boiled as soon, but also no sooner for being helped by my consciousness. The essential thing is that energy of combustion in the fire should be turned into energy of boiling in the water. Now, what is Berkeley's interpretation of the facts? Fire, kettle, water, and ebullition are what in his writings are called "ideas"—*i.e.*, phenomena occasionally in my mind, but always in God's mind. And according to this view the necessary antecedent to the boiling of the water is not the fire's burning, but God's consciousness of its burning, his perception being the essence of the operation. But it is proved by experience that neither my perception nor anyone else's ever made a single drop of water boil. In other words, perception is not in this instance a *vera causa*. Why, then, should the perception of any other mind, however exalted, have that effect?

Nor is this all. How does Berkeley know that God exists? Because, he says, to exist is to be perceived, and therefore for the universe to exist implies a universal Percipient. But he got the idea of God from other men, who certainly did not come by it as a generalisation from their perceptions; they got it by generalising from their voluntary actions, which do produce the changes that perception cannot produce. It will be said that volitions and the feelings that prompt them exist only in consciousness. In whose consciousness? In that of a spirit. And what is spirit apart from

sensation, thought, feeling, and volition? Simply one of those abstract ideas whose existence Berkeley himself denied.

Hume.

The next step in the evolution of English thought was to consist in a return to Locke's method, involving a complete breach with seventeenth-century Platonism, and with the Continental metaphysics that it had inspired. This decisive movement was effected by one in whom German criticism has recognised the greatest of all British philosophers. David Hume (1711–1776) was born and bred at Edinburgh, which also seems to have been through life his favourite residence. But his great work, the *Treatise on Human Nature*, was written during a stay in France, between the ages of twenty-three and twenty-six. Thus his precocity was even greater than Berkeley's. Indeed, such maturity of thought so early reached is without a parallel in history. But Hume's style had not then acquired the perfection—the inimitable charm, Kant calls it—of his later writings; and, whether for this or for other reasons, the book, in his own words, "fell dead-born from the press." In middle life the office of librarian of the Advocates' Library at Edinburgh gave him access to the materials for his *History of England*, which proved a source of fame and profit. A profound historical scholar, J. S. Brewer, tells us that Hume "possessed in a pre-eminent degree some of the highest excellences of a historian." Other historians have treated their subjects philosophically; he furnishes the sole instance of a great speculative genius who has also produced a historical masterpiece of the first order. But morally it is a blot on his fame. It is sad that a philosopher should have deliberately perverted the truth, that one who has

performed priceless services to freedom of thought should have made himself the apologist of clericalising absolutism, and, still more, that a master of English played this part to some extent through hatred of the great English

DAVID HUME.

people engendered by disappointed literary ambition. It may be mentioned, however, as a possible extenuation that towards the middle of the eighteenth century the highest English ability had thrown itself, with few exceptions, on the Tory side. It must be mentioned

also that in private life Hume's character was entirely admirable—cheerful, generous, and gentle, without a frailty and without a stain. His opinions were unpopular; but his life offered no handle for obloquy, although his studious retirement was more than once exchanged for the responsibilities of political office, and the freedom from pedantry so conspicuous in his writings bears witness to habits of well-bred social intercourse.

Hume's philosophy is best understood when we consider it as, in the first place, a criticism of Berkeley, just as Berkeley's had been a criticism of Locke. It will be remembered that the founder of subjective idealism discarded the notion of material substance as an "abstract idea," an unintelligible figment devoid of any sensuous or imaginative content. The only true substances are the subjects of what we call experience communicating through sensation with God, the infinite spirit whose eternal consciousness is reality itself. Hume applied the same tests to spiritual substance, and found that it equally disappeared under his introspective analysis. He begins by dividing the contents of consciousness into two classes, impressions and ideas—the second being copies of the first, and distinguished from them by their relative faintness. Now, from these perceptions (which he called thoughts) Descartes had passed by an immediate inference to the ego or self, which he affirms as the primary fact of consciousness, using it as a basis for sundry other conclusions. But Hume stops him at once, and will not grant the existence of the metaphysical self—that is, a simple and continued substance, as distinguished from particular states of consciousness. We are, he declares, "nothing but a bundle of different perceptions, which

succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement." "There is properly no *simplicity* in it [the self] at one time, nor *identity* in different [times]; whatever natural propensity we may have to imagine that simplicity and identity." So much being assumed, Berkeley's whole argument for a new theology founded on subjective idealism is bound to collapse, as also is the argument for natural immortality derived from the supposed simplicity and identity of the thinking substance.

Modern critics have rightly insisted, as against Hume, that isolated perceptions without a self are abstractions not less unintelligible than a self without perceptions. But the metaphysical argument for human immortality has not benefited by this more concrete interpretation of epistemology; and probably Hume was really more interested in destroying this than in maintaining the sceptical paradox which does not recur in his later writings.

A word must be added about Hume's division of perceptions into impressions and ideas. The point left out of sight in this analysis is that impressions of sense habitually find their reflexes not in revived sensations, but in expressions, in motor reactions which, with human beings, mostly take the form of words uttered or thought. These, no doubt, are associated to some small extent with revived sensations; but they are more commonly grouped with other words, with movements of the limbs, and with actions on the material or human environment of the percipient. Such expressions are incomparably easier to revive in memory, imagination, or expectation than the impressions that originally excited them; and, indeed, it is in connection with them that such revivals of sensation

as we actually experience take place. And it is probable that to this active side of our consciousness that we may trace those associative processes which Hume studies next in his analysis of human knowledge.

Putting aside principles of doubtful or secondary value, the relations between states of consciousness that first offer themselves to view are, according to Hume, Co-existence and Succession (united under the name of Contiguity), Resemblance, and Causation. It is with the account he gives of this last category that his name is inseparably associated, for from it all subsequent speculation has taken rise. Yet primarily he seems to have had no other object in view than to simplify the laws of knowledge by resolving one of them into a particular case of another, and thus reducing his three categories to two. The relation of cause and effect, he tells us, is no more than a certain relation between antecedent and consequent in time where the sequence is so habitual as to establish in our minds a custom of expecting the one whenever the other occurs. The sequence is not necessary, for one can think, without any self-contradiction, of a change which has not been preceded by another change ; nor is it, like the truths of geometry, something that can be known *à priori*. Without experience no one could tell that bread will nourish a man and not nourish a lion, nor even predict how a billiard-ball will behave when another ball strikes it. Should it be objected that the *à priori* knowledge of a general principle need not involve an equal knowledge of nature's operations in particular cases, Hume would doubtless reply by saying that there is no abstract idea of causation apart from its concrete exemplifications.

It is possible to accept Hume's theory in principle

without pledging oneself to all his incidental contentions. Causation, as a general law, may be known only by experience, whether we can or cannot think of it as a pure abstraction. And we may interpret it in terms of unconditional antecedence and consequence, while discarding his apparent assumption of an inscrutable connection between the two ; a mysterious necessity for the production of the one by the other, for which it is felt that a reason exists, but for which our reason cannot account. It is inconceivable that our knowledge of any given sequence could be increased, except by the disclosure of intermediate sequences, making their continuity, in space and time, more absolute than we had before perceived, until the whole process has been resolved into a transference of momentum from one molecule to another—a change for which, according to Hume, no reason can be given. Nor, on his principles, would it help us to explain such transferences by bringing them under the law of the Conservation of Energy. For, although this would be a great triumph for science, his philosophy demands a reason why the quantity of energy should remain unalterable for ever.

It is a mistake, shared by Hume with his opponents, to suppose that the common sense of mankind ever saw more than invariable sequence in the relation of cause and effect, or ever interpolated a mysterious power between them. In the famous verse, "Let there be light, and there was light," it is the instantaneity of succession, not the interpolation of any exerted effort, that so impresses the imagination. And when Shakespeare wants to illustrate logical compulsion in conduct, his reference is to an instance of invariable succession :—

> This above all,—to thine own self be true ;
> And it must follow, as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man.

Indeed, I think it will be found on examination that when we associate the idea of power, or of necessity, with causal sequences, it is not in connection with a case of causation here and now, but rather in reference to similar effects that may be expected from the same cause elsewhere or at another time. And that "custom," by which Hume seeks to explain our belief in the "power" of the cause to produce its effect as well as the "necessity" of the connection between them, rather acts negatively by eliminating all other antecedents as possible causes than positively by setting up a habit of thinking about a particular antecedent and consequent at the same time. And that is why a burnt child needs no repetition of the experiment to be convinced that contact with fire was the cause of its pain. The very novelty of the experiment was enough to eliminate any explanation other than that of contact with the flame.

The child, as it grows older, may learn to speak of the fire as having a power to burn. But that merely means, "if I touch it, it will burn me—or light paper if I hold the paper to it." Power, in fact, is incomplete causation, the presence of every condition but that one which, in Aristotelian phrase, turns potency into act. And it is in contradistinction to that idea of possibility that the idea of necessary connection comes in. When all the elements of the causal antecedent are combined the effect necessarily supervenes. Furthermore, the causal antecedent is thought of as necessary in contrast with the contingency of other antecedents whose connection with the effect is merely accidental. Finally,

the idea of production has been quoted as vitally distinguishing true causation from invariable sequence. But various myths, of which the story of Œdipus is the best known, show that primitive folk regard day and night as alternately producing one another, just as Polonius quotes their sequence as a type of logical necessity.

Hume professed himself a Deist, but probably with no more seriousness than when he, or when Gibbon, called Christianity "our religion." At any rate, his philosophy destroys every argument for the existence of a Creator advanced in his own or in the preceding century. Nor need his particular theory of causation be invoked for the purpose. The most telling attack is on the argument from design. The apparent adaptation of means to ends in living organisms is quoted as evidence of their having been planned by a conscious intelligence. But, answers Hume, such an intelligence would itself exhibit marks of design, and so on for ever. Why not, then, stop at the animal organism as an ultimate fact? It was Shelley's unlucky demand for a solution of this difficulty that led to his expulsion from Oxford.

It has been shown how the new analysis of mind cut the ground from under Berkeley's theism, and from under the metaphysical argument for human immortality. By denying the substantiality of the ego it also confirmed the necessitarianism of Spinoza. Hume seemed to think he could abate the unpopularity of this doctrine by interpreting the constant motivation of human actions as a mere relation of antecedence and consequence. But the decisive point was that he assimilated sequences in conscious behaviour to the unconscious sequences in physical events. Thus, for

the vulgar and the theologians, he remained what would now be called a materialist.

Kant.

The English philosophy of experience and the Continental philosophy of *à priori* spiritualism, after their brief convergence in the metaphysics of Berkeley, parted company once more, the empirical tradition being henceforth represented, not only by Hume, but in a more or less anti-Christian and much more superficial form by Voltaire, Rousseau, and the French Encyclopædists; while the Leibnizian philosophy was systematised and taught in Germany by Wolf, and a dull but useful sort of modernised Aristotelianism was set up under the name of "common sense" by Thomas Reid (1710–1796) and his school in the Scottish Universities.

The extraordinary genius who was to re-combine the parted currents in a speculative movement of unexampled volume, velocity, and depth showed nothing of the precocity that had distinguished Berkeley and Hume. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), the son of a saddler of Scottish extraction, was born at Königsberg in Prussia, where he spent his whole life, holding a chair at the University from 1770 to 1797. It is related that on the day of his death a small bright cloud was seen sailing alone across the clear blue sky, of such a remarkable appearance that a crowd assembled on the bridge to watch it. One of them, a common soldier, exclaimed, "That is Kant's soul going to heaven!"—a touching and beautiful tribute to the illustrious German, whose lofty, pure, and luminous spirit it was uniquely fitted to characterise.

Kant grew up among the Pietists, a school which played much the same part in Germany that the

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Methodists and the Evangelicals played in England; indeed, it was from them that John Wesley received his final inspiration. The Königsberg student came in time to discard their theology while retaining the stern Puritan morality with which it was wedded, and even, Rationalist as he became, some of their mystical religiosity. What drew him away to philosophy seems to have been first the study of classical philology and then physical science, especially as presented to him in Newton's works. And so the young man's first ambition, after settling down as a University teacher at Königsberg, was to extend the Newtonian method still further by explaining, on mechanical principles, the origin and constitution of that celestial system whose movements Newton had reduced to law, but whose beginning he had left unaccounted for except by—what was not science—the direct fiat of omnipotence.

Kant offered a brilliant solution of the problem in his *Natural History of the Heavens* (1755), a work embodying the celebrated nebular hypothesis rediscovered forty years later by Laplace. It has been well observed that great philosophers are mostly, if not always, what at Oxford and Cambridge would be called "double-firsts"—that is, apart from their philosophy, they have done first-class work in some special line of investigation, as Descartes by creating analytical geometry, Spinoza by applying Biblical criticisms to theology, Leibniz by discovering the differential calculus, Locke by his theory of constitutional government, Berkeley by his theory of vision, Hume by his contributions to history and political economy. Kant's cosmogony may have been premature and mistaken in its details; but his idea of the heavenly bodies as having originated from the condensation of diffused gaseous matter still holds its

ground ; and although the more general idea of natural evolution as opposed to supernatural creation is not modern but Greek, to have revived and reapplied it on so great a scale is a service of extraordinary merit.

The next great event in Kant's intellectual career is his rejection of Continental apriorism in metaphysics for the empiricism of the English school, especially as regards the idea of causation. For a few years (1762–1765) Kant accepts Hume's theory that there is nothing in any succession of events or in change generally to prove on grounds of pure reason that there must be more in it than a customary sequence. To believe that anything may happen without a cause does not involve a logical contradiction ; and at that time he believed nothing to be known *à priori* except that the denial of which involves such a contradiction. But on reconsidering the basis of mathematical truth it seemed to him to be something other than the logical laws of Identity and Contradiction. When we say that seven and five are twelve we put something into the predicate that was not affirmed in the subject, and also when we say that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points. Yet the second proposition is as certain as the first, and both are certain in the highest degree, more certain than anything learned from experience, and needing no experience to confirm them.

So much being admitted, we have to recognise a fundamental division of judgments into two classes, analytic and synthetic. Judgments in which the predicate adds nothing to the subject are analytic. When we affirm all matter to be extended, that is an instance of the former, for here we are only making more explicit what was already contained in the notion of matter. On the other hand, when we affirm that all matter is heavy, that is an

instance of the latter or synthetic class, for we can think of matter without thinking that it has weight. Furthermore, this is not only a synthetic judgment, but it is a synthetic judgment *à posteriori;* for the law of universal gravitation is known only by experience. But there are also synthetic judgments *à priori;* for, as we have just seen, the fundamental truths of arithmetic and geometry belong to this class, as do also by consequence all the propositions logically deduced from these —that is to say, the whole of mathematical science.

Up to this point Kant would have carried the whole Cartesian school, and, more generally, all the modern Platonists, along with him ; while he would have given the English empiricists and their French disciples a rather hard nut to crack. For they would have had to choose between admitting that mathematics was a mass of identical propositions or explaining, in the face of Hume's criticism, what claims to absolute certainty its truths, any more than the Law of Causation, possess. Now, the great philosophical genius of Kant is shown by nothing more than by this, that he did not stop here. Recognising to the same extent as Locke and Hume that all knowledge comes from experience—at any rate, in the sense of not coming by supernatural communication, as Malebranche and Berkeley thought—he puts the famous question, How are synthetic judgments *à priori* possible ? Or, as it might be paradoxically expressed, How come we to know with the most certainty the things that we have not been taught by experience ? The answer is, that we know them by the most intimate experience of all—the underlying consciousness that we have made them what they are. Our minds are no mere passive recipients, in which a mass of sensations, poured in from some external

source, are then arranged after an order equally originated from without ; there is a principle of spontaneity in our own subjectivity by which the objective order of nature is created. What Kant calls the Matter of knowledge is given from without, the Form from within. And this process begins with the imposition of the two great fundamental Forms, Space and Time, on the raw material of sensation by our minds.

By space and time Kant does not mean the abstract ideas of coexistence and succession ; nor does he call them, as some critics used incorrectly to suppose, forms of thought, but forms of intuition. We do not build them up with the help of muscular or other feelings, but are conscious of them in a way not admitting of any further analysis. The parts of space, no doubt, are coexistent, but they are also connected and continuous ; more than this, positions in space do not admit of mutual substitution ; the right hand and left hand glove are perfectly symmetrical, but the one cannot be superimposed on the other. Besides, all particular spaces are contained in universal space, not as particular conceptions are contained in a general conception, but as parts of that which extends to infinity, and where each has an individual place of its own, repeating all the characters of space in general except its illimitable extension. And the same is true of time, with this further distinction from abstract succession, that succession may be reversed ; whereas the order of past, present, and future is irreversibly maintained.

The contemporary school of Reid in Scotland, and the subsequent Eclectic school of Victor Cousin in France, would agree with Kant in maintaining that sensuous experience will not account for our knowledge of space and time. But they would protest, in the name

of common sense, against the reduction of these apparently fundamental elements to purely subjective forms. They would ask, with the German critic Trendelenburg, Why cannot space and time be known intuitively and yet really exist? Kant furnishes no direct answer to the question, but he has suggested one in another connection. Mathematical truth is concerned with spatial and temporal relations, and for that truth to be above suspicion and exception we must assume that the objects with which it deals are wholly within our grasp —that our knowledge of them is exhaustive. But there could be no such assurance on the supposition that, besides the space and time of our sensuous experience, another space and time existed independently of our consciousness as attributes of things in themselves—possibly differing in important respects from ours—as, for example, a finite, or a non-continuous, or a four-dimensional space, and a time with a circular instead of a progressive movement.

This easy assumption that reality accommodates itself to our intellectual convenience, instead of our being obliged to accommodate our theories of knowledge to reality, runs through and vitiates the whole of Kant's philosophy. But, taking the narrower ground of logical consistency, one hardly sees how his principles can hold together. We are told that the subjectivity of space and time is not presented as a plausible hypothesis, but as a certain and indubitable truth, for in no other way can mathematical certainty be explained. The claim is questionable, but let it be granted. Immediately a fresh difficulty starts up. What is the source of our certainty that space and time are subjective forms of intuition? If the answer is, because that assumption guarantees the certainty of mathematics, then Kant is

reasoning in a circle. If he appeals—as in consistency he ought—to another order of subjectivity as the sanction of his first transcendental argument, such reasoning involves the regress to infinity.

Again, on Kant's theory, time is the form of intuition for the inner sense. So when we become conscious of mental events we know them only as phenomena ; we remain ignorant of what mind is in itself. But before the publication in 1770 of Kant's inaugural dissertation on *The Sensible and the Intelligible World* every one, plain men and philosophers alike, believed that the consciousness of our successive thoughts and feelings was the very type of reality itself ; and they held this belief with a higher degree of assurance than that given to the axioms of geometry. By what right, then, are we asked to give up the greater for the less, to surrender our self-assurance as a ransom for Euclid's *Elements* or even for Newton's *Principia ?*

Once more, surely mathematics is concerned not with space and time as such, but with their artificial delimitations as points, lines, figures, numbers, moments, etc. And it may be granted that these are purely subjective in the sense of being imposed by our imagination (with the aid of sensible signs) on the external world. What if *this* subjectivity were the true source of that peculiar certainty belonging to synthetic judgments *à priori ?* True, Kant counts in our judgments about the infinity and eternity of space and time with other accepted characteristics of theirs as intuitive certainties. But there are thinkers who find the negation of such properties not inconceivable, so that they cannot be adduced as evidence of a priority, still less of subjectivity.

Eleven years after the inaugural dissertation Kant

published his most important contribution to philosophy, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). Pure Reason means the faculty by which ideas are obtained independently of all experience, and the critic's object is to ascertain how far such ideas are valid. As a preliminary to that inquiry the question is also mooted, How is experience possible? It is answered by a critique of the understanding or faculty of conception; and as conception implies perception, this again is prefaced by a section in which Kant's theory of space and time is repeated and reinforced.

It will be remembered that what started the whole of the new criticism was Hume's sceptical analysis of Causation; and the central interest of *The Critique of Pure Reason* lies in the effort to reconstitute the causal law in the light of the new theory of knowledge; but so enormous is the mass of technicalities piled up for this purpose as largely to conceal it from view, and, on its disclosure, to give the idea of a gigantic machine set in motion to crack a nut. And the nut after all is *not* cracked; the shell slips from between the grappling surfaces long before they meet.

We have seen how Kant interpreted every judgment as a synthesis of subject and predicate. Now, whether the synthesis be *à priori* or *à posteriori*, a study of the forms of judgment as enumerated in the common logic shows that there are four, and only four, ways in which it can be effected. All judgments fall under the following classes: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Modality—terms whose meaning will be presently explained. And each of these again is tripartite. We may say (i.) that one A is B, or that some A's are B, or that all A's are B; (ii.) that A is B, that A is not B, that not all A's are B; (iii.) that A is B, that A

is B if C is D, that A is either B, C, or D ; or (iv.) that A may be B, that A is B, or that A must be B. The reason why there are four and only four classes is that judgment has to do with the subject in reference to the predicate, which gives Quantity ; with the predicate in reference to the subject, which gives Quality ; with the connection between the two, which gives Relation ; and with the synthesis between them in reference to our knowledge of it, which gives Modality.

Now, according to Kant, that there should be so many kinds of judgment and no more implies that our understanding contributes a formal element to the constitution of all knowledge, consisting of four combining principles, without which experience would be impossible. He calls these Categories, and they are enumerated in the following table :—

(i.) Quantity.
Unity, Plurality, Totality.
(ii.) Quality.
Reality, Negation, Limitation.
(iii.) Relation.
Substance and Accident ; Cause and Effect ; Action and Reaction (Reciprocity).
(iv.) Modality.
Possibility and Impossibility ; Existence and Non-Existence ; Necessity and Contingency.

A study of the Categories suggests some rather obvious criticisms on the Critical Philosophy itself. (i.) The first two terms in each triad evidently form an antithetical couple, of which the third term is the synthesis. Here we have the first germ of a disease by which the systems of Kant's successors were much more seriously infected. In the table it is shown by

the intrusion of Limitation, a wholly superfluous adjunct to Reality and Negation; in the conversion of Reciprocity into a wholly fictitious synthesis of Substantiality with Causation; and in the complete absurdity of making Necessity a combination of Possibility with Existence. (ii.) Innate ideas, after they had been exploded by Locke, are reintroduced into philosophy by a sufficiently transparent piece of legerdemain. For assuming that the human intelligence possesses a power of organising and drilling the sensuous appearances which without its control would appear only as a disorderly mob, it by no means follows that they must thereby be referred to an extraphenomenal principle. But such a principle is plainly implied by the category of Substance. Used in a scholastic sense, it does not mean the sensuous attributes of a thing taken altogether, but something that underlies and supports them. And Kant himself seems to take his category in that significance. For he claims to deduce from it the law of the indestructibility of matter; as if I could not say snow is white without committing myself to the assertion that the ultimate particles of snow have existed and will exist for ever. (iii.) The substitution of Causation for logical sequence, as implicated in the hypothetical judgment of Relation, is perfectly scandalous; and still more scandalous is substitution of Reciprocity or Action and Reaction for Disjunction. The last points require to be examined a little more in detail.

The sequence of an effect to its cause has only a verbal resemblance to the sequence of a logical consequent to its reason. We declare categorically that every change has a cause which precedes it. Logical sequence is, on the other hand, as the very name of the

judgment shows, hypothetical, and may possibly not represent any actual occurrence, besides being, what causation is not, independent of time. A particular case of causation may be hypothetical in respect to our belief that it actually occurred; never the law of causation itself as a general truth. And the same distinction applies with even greater force to the alleged connection between a logical disjunction and a physical reaction. When I say A is either B or C, but not both, there is only this much resemblance, that both cases involve the ideas of equality and of opposition. From the admission that A is not B, I infer that it is C, or, contrariwise, from the admission that it is B, I infer that it is not C, and in both instances with the same certainty; but this does not prove that the earth attracts the moon as much as the moon attracts the earth, only in opposite directions; nor yet that in certain instances all the heat lost by one body is gained by another.

Kant had learned this much from Hume, that causation is essentially a relation of antecedence and consequence in time; and apparently his way of "categorising" the relation—*i.e.*, of proving its apriority—is to represent it as the logical form of reason and consequent masquerading, so to speak, under the intuitional time-form. Yet he frequently speaks of our senses as being affected by things in themselves, implying that the resulting sensations are somehow caused by those otherwise unknown entities. But since things in themselves do not, according to Kant, exist in space and time, they cannot be causally related to phenomena or to anything else.

In his criticism of Pure Reason, properly so called —that is, of inferences made by human faculty with

regard to questions transcending all experience—Kant shows that of such things nothing can be known. The ideality of time and space once taken as proved, this amount of agnosticism seems to follow as a matter of course. It is idle to speculate about the possible extent or duration of a universe that cannot be described in terms of coexistence and succession. For each of us at the dissolution of our bodily organism time itself, and therefore existence as alone we conceive it, comes to an end. The law of causation, applying as it does to phenomena alone, offers no evidence for the existence of a God who transcends phenomena. Kant, however, is not satisfied with such a simple and summary procedure as this. He tries to show, with most unnecessary pedantry, that the conditional synthesis of the Understanding inevitably leads thought on to the unconditional synthesis of the Reason only to find itself lost in a hopeless welter of paralogisms and self-contradictions.

At this stage we are handed over to the guidance of what Kant calls the Practical Reason. This faculty gives a synthesis for conduct, as Pure Reason gave a synthesis for intelligence. All reason demands uniformity, order, law ; only what in theory is recognised as true has in practice to be imposed as right. In this way Kant arrives at his formula of absolute morality : Act so that the principle of thy conduct may be the law for all rational beings. He calls this the Categorical Imperative, as distinguished from such hypothetical imperatives as : Act this way if you wish to be happy either here or hereafter ; or, act as public opinion tells you. Moreover, the motive, as distinguished from the end of moral action, should not be calculating self-interest nor uncalculating impulse, but simply desire to fulfil the law as such. Previous moralists had set up

the greatest happiness of the greatest number as the end of action, and such an aim does not lie far from Kant's philosophy; but they could think of no better motive for pursuing it than self-love or a rather undefined social instinct; and their *summum bonum* would take the happiness of irrational animals into account, while Kant absolutely subordinates the interests of these to human good. A further coincidence between the Utilitarian and the Kantian ethics is that in the latter also the happiness of others, not their perfection, should be the end and aim of each. Finally, the philosophy of Pure Reason adopts from contemporary French thought as the governing idea of political organisation what was long to be a principle of English Utilitarianism—"the liberty of each, bounded only by the equal liberty of all."

Nevertheless, the old postulate of a necessary connection between virtue and individual happiness reappears in Kant's ethical theory, and leads to the construction of a new religious philosophy. His critique had left no place for the old theology, nor yet for that doctrine of free-will so dear to most theologians. Its whole object had been to vindicate against Hume the necessity and universality of causation. Human actions then must, like all other phenomena, form an unbroken chain of antecedents and consequents. Nor does Kant conceal his conviction that, with sufficient knowledge and powers of calculation, a man's whole future conduct might be foretold. Nevertheless, under the eighteenth-century idea of man as naturally the creature of passion or self-interest, he claims for us, as moral agents, the power of choosing to obey duty in preference to either. And this freedom is supposed to be made conceivable by the subjectivity of time and causation, outside of which,

as a thing in itself, stands the moral will. That morality, whether as action or mere intention, involves succession in time is utterly ignored. Nor is this all. Assuming without warrant that the moral law demands an ultimate coincidence between happiness and virtue, made impossible in this life by human weakness, Kant argues that there must be an unending future life to secure time enough for working out a problem whose solution is infinitely remote. And, finally, there must be an omnipotent moral God to provide facilities for undertaking that somewhat gratuitous Psyche's task. Before Kant moral theology had argued that the Judge of all the world must do right, apportioning happiness to desert. It was reserved for him to argue, conversely, that for right to be done such a Judge must exist, and that therefore he does exist.

In appreciating the services of Kant to philosophy we must guard ourselves against being influenced by the extravagant panegyrics of his countrymen, whose passion for square circles he so generously gratifies. Still, after every deduction for mere Laputian pedantry has been made, the balance of fruitful suggestion remains vast. (i.) The antithesis of object and subject, although not counted among the categories of his *Critique*, has remained a prime category of thought ever since. (ii.) The idea of a necessary limit to human knowledge, given by the very theory of that knowledge, as distinguished from the Scepticism of the Greeks—in other words, what we now call Agnosticism—may not be final, but it still remains to be dealt with. (iii.) The possibility of reducing *à priori* knowledge to a form of unconscious experience has put an end to dogmatic metaphysics. (iv.) The problems of Time and Space have taken a central place in speculation ; it has been

shown—what Hume did not see—that Causation has the certainty of a mathematical axiom ; and it has been made highly probable that all these difficulties may find their solution in a larger interpretation of experience. (v.) Morality has been definitely dissociated from the appeal to selfish interests, whether in this life or in another.

We have now to trace, within the limits prescribed by the nature of this work, the development of philosophy under Kant's German successors.

Chapter IV.

THE GERMAN IDEALISTS

Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Herbart.

The Critical Philosophy won its first success in Germany less as a new epistemology than as what, in fact, its author meant it to be, a rehabilitation of religious belief. The limits of Reason had been drawn so closely only to make room for Faith. But the current of Rationalism was running too strongly to be so summarily stopped; and so with Kant's ablest successors faith is altogether abandoned, while the claims of reason are pushed relentlessly through. Among these more logical thinkers the first is J. G. Fichte (1762–1814). In him—for the third time in modern history, for the first and last time in Germany—the hero as philosopher finds a worthy representative. Born in Silesia, like Kant of humble parentage, and bred in circumstances of more oppressive poverty, he also received a severely religious and moral training as a preparation for the pastoral office. The bounty of an aristocratic patron gave him an excellent public-school education; but as a university student, first at Jena and then at Leipzig, he had to earn a scanty living by private tuition, finally abandoning his destined career to accept a post in a Swiss family at Zurich. There, as the result of an attachment in which the love was nearly all on the lady's side, he became engaged to a niece of the poet Klopstock, and after a long delay, caused by money

difficulties, was enabled to marry her. In the meantime he had become a convert to Kant's philosophy, winning the admiration of the old master himself by a *Critique of all Revelation*, written in four weeks. Published anonymously by an oversight, it was generally attributed to Kant himself, and, on the real authorship becoming known, won for Fichte an extraordinary Professorate of Philosophy at Jena, where his success as a lecturer and writer gave him for a time the leadership in German speculation (1794–1799). An untoward incident brought this stage of his career to an end. Writing in a philosophical review, he defined God as "the moral order of the universe." Dr. Temple long afterwards used much the same phrase when Bishop of Exeter, finding it, presumably, compatible with official Theism; but such was not the impression created in Saxony. A cry of atheism arose, much to the disgust of Fichte, whose position would have been better described as pantheistic. But what incensed him most was the suspicion of an attempt to interfere with the liberty of academic teaching. With his usual impetuosity he talked about resigning his chair—with a hint that others would follow his example—were the authorities at Weimar to permit such an outrage. Goethe, who was then Minister, observed that no Government could allow itself to be threatened, and Fichte was at once relieved of his post. Settling at Berlin, he became Professor of Philosophy in the new University founded after the French conquest of Prussia, having previously done much to revive the national spirit by his *Addresses to the German Nation* (1807–1808). These were in appearance the programme of a new educational Utopia; but their real purpose was so evident that the speaker lived in daily expectation of being summoned

before a French court-martial and shot. Unlike his countrymen, Goethe, Hegel, and Schopenhauer, Fichte passionately resented the Napoleonic despotism, throwing himself heart and soul into the great uprising by which it was finally overthrown. Although his wish to accompany the victorious army as field preacher could not be gratified, the campaign of 1813 still claimed him as one of its victims. After nursing his heroic wife to recovery from a hospital fever caught in attendance on the sick and wounded at Berlin, he took the infection from her and died early in 1814, soon after hearing that Blücher had crossed the Rhine.

G. H. Lewes, in a well-known story, has made himself and his readers merry over a German savant who undertakes to evolve the idea of a camel out of the depths of his moral consciousness. The phrase is commonly quoted as "inner consciousness," but this takes away its whole point. For the original satirist, who, I think, was not Lewes, but Heine, had in view the philosophy of Fichte. It need hardly be said that German savants are as careful observers and diligent collectors of facts as any others; and Fichte in particular trusted solely to experience for the knowledge of natural phenomena. But even as regards his general philosophy the place it gives to morality has been misconceived even by his closest students. With him goodwill really plays a less important part than with Kant, being not an end in itself, but a means towards an end. And what that end is his teaching makes quite clear.

Kant's first critics put their finger on the weak point of his system, the thing in itself. So, assuming it to be discarded, Fichte set to work on new lines, the lines of pure idealism. But, though an idealist, he is not, any more than Berkeley, a solipsist. The celebrated

antithesis of the ego and the non-ego dates from him, and strikes the keynote of his whole system. It might be thought that, as compared with the old realism, this was a distinction without a difference. But that is not so; for, according to Fichte, the non-ego is subjective in its origin, and that is where he departs widely from Berkeley's theological idealism. Not that I create the not-myself; I *assume* it as the condition of my self-consciousness—a remarkable feat of logic, but after all not more wonderful than that space and time should result from the activity of the outer and inner senses. This figment of my imagination is anyhow solid enough to beget a new feeling of resistance and recoil, throwing the self back on itself, and bringing with it the interpretation of that external impact by the category of causation, of its own activity as substance, and of the whole deal between the ego and the non-ego as interaction or reciprocity. In this way the first triad of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis is obtained; and from this, by a vast expenditure of ingenuity, the whole array of Kant's forms, categories, and faculties is evolved as a coherent system of scientific thought in obedience to a single principle—the self-realisation of the ego, alternatively admitting and transcending a limit to its activity.

It will be easily understood that this self-realising ego is neither Fichte's nor anyone else's self, but a universal principle, fundamentally the same in all. One is reminded of Descartes's self-thinking thought by which the reality of the universe was guaranteed; but between the two there is this vast difference, that the Frenchman's ego resembles a box containing a variety of independent ideas, to be separately handled and examined; the German's is a box enclosing a coiled-up spring by

the expansion of which all the wheels of the philosophical machine are made go round. From the action of the not-self on the self results the whole of nature as we conceive it; from the reaction of the self on the not-self, the whole mentality and morality of man—morality being understood to include the domestic, social, political, educational, and industrial organisation of life. The final cause, the impelling ideal of existence, is the self-realisation of the ego, the entire absorption into its personal energy of the non-ego, of nature, to be effected by perfect knowledge of how the physical universe is constituted issuing in perfect subjugation of its forces to the human will. But such a realisation of the Absolute Ego would mean its annihilation, for, as we have seen, the antithesis between objective and subjective is the very condition of consciousness that without which it could neither begin nor continue to exist. Therefore the process must go on for ever, and this necessity guarantees the eternal duration of the human race—not, as Kant had dreamed, of the individual soul, since for Fichte the Categorical Imperative demands a consummation widely different from that combination of virtue with happiness which had satisfied his master. And the agency by which it is being effected through infinite time is not a personal God, but that moral order of the world which Fichte regarded as the only true object of religious feeling. As for human immortality, he seems to have first accepted, but afterwards rejected it in favour of a mystical union with the divine.

It has been said that morality was not with Fichte what it had been with Kant—the highest good. Nevertheless, as a means towards the final synthesis, morality interested him intensely, and his best work has been

done in ethics. As a condition of self-realisation the primal ego becomes personified in a multitude of free individualities. Just as in Stoicism, each individual is conceived as having a special office to perform in the world-process, and the State exists—ideally speaking—in order to guarantee the necessary independence of all its citizens. For this purpose everyone must have the right to work and the right to a living wage. Thus Fichte appears as the first theorist of State Socialism in the history of German thought. Probably the example of the Greek Stoics with their communistic utopias acting on a kindred spirit, rather than any prophetic vision of the coming century, is to be credited for this remarkable anticipation.

Schelling.

German philosophy is prolific of self-contradictions; and so far the most flagrant example has been offered by Fichte's *Theory of Knowledge*, starting as it does with the idea of an impersonal ego, developing through a process in which this selfless self demands its own negation at every step, and determined by the prospect of a catastrophe that would be the annihilation of consciousness itself. In fact, there seemed no need to wait until time had run out; the self, or, as it was now called, the subject, had absorbed all reality, only to find that the material universe, reconstituted as the object of knowledge, was an indispensable condition of its existence. And meanwhile the physical sciences, more particularly those concerned with inorganic nature, were entering on a series of triumphs unparalleled since the days of Newton. Philosophy must come to terms with these or cease to exist.

The task of reconciliation was first attempted by

F. W. J. Schelling (1775–1854), a Suabian, and the first South German who made a name in pure philosophy. Educated at the University of Tübingen, at an early age he covered an encyclopædic range of studies and began authorship at nineteen, gaining a professorship at Jena four years later. Wandering about from one university to another, and putting forward new opinions as often as he changed his residence, the young adventurer ceased to publish after 1813, and remained silent till in 1841 he came forward at Berlin as the champion of a reactionary current, practically renouncing the naturalistic pantheism by which his early reputation had been made. But he utterly failed in the attempt, which was finally abandoned in the fifth year from its inception. Lewes, who saw Schelling in his old age, describes him as remarkably like Socrates; his admirers called him a modern Plato; but he had nothing of the deep moral earnestness that characterised either, nor indeed was morality needed for the work that he actually did. This, to use the phrase of his fellow-student Hegel,[1] consisted in raising philosophy to its absolute standpoint, in passing from the subjective moralism of the eighteenth century to the all-comprehensive systematisation of the nineteenth.

Schelling began as a disciple of Fichte, but he came simultaneously under the influence of Spinoza, whose fame had been incessantly spreading through the last generation in Germany, with some reinforcement from the revived name of Bruno. Their teaching served to make the latent pantheism of Fichte more explicit, while the great contemporary discoveries gave a new interest to the study of nature, which Fichte, unlike Kant, had put in the background, strictly subordinating it to the moral service of man. Had he cared to evolve

the idea of a camel from his moral consciousness, the operation would not have demanded several years, but only a few minutes' thought. As thus: the moral development of humanity needed the co-operation of such a race as the Semites. To form their character a long residence in the Arabian deserts was needed. But for such nomads an auxiliary animal would be needed with long legs and neck, a stomach for storing water, hump, etc.—Q.E.D. Schelling also began by explaining the material world as a preparation for the spiritual; only he did not employ the method of teleological adaptation, but a method of rather fanciful analogy. As the evolution of self-conscious reason had proceeded by a triple movement of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, so a parallel process had to be discovered in the advance towards a consciousness supposed to be exhibited in organic and inorganic nature.

The fundamental idea of natural philosophy is polarity—opposite forces combining to neutralise one another and then parting to be reunited at a higher stage of evolution. Thus attraction and repulsion—represented as space and time—by their synthesis compose matter; magnetism and electricity produce chemical affinity; life results from a triad of inorganic forces; in life itself productivity and irritability give birth to sensibility. The order of the terms made little, if any, difference. When long afterwards iron was magnetised by the electric current, Schelling claimed for himself the credit of anticipating this discovery, although he had placed magnetism before electricity.

The next step was to construct a philosophy of history. This, with much else, is included under the name of *A System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800) in the most finished of Schelling's literary compositions.

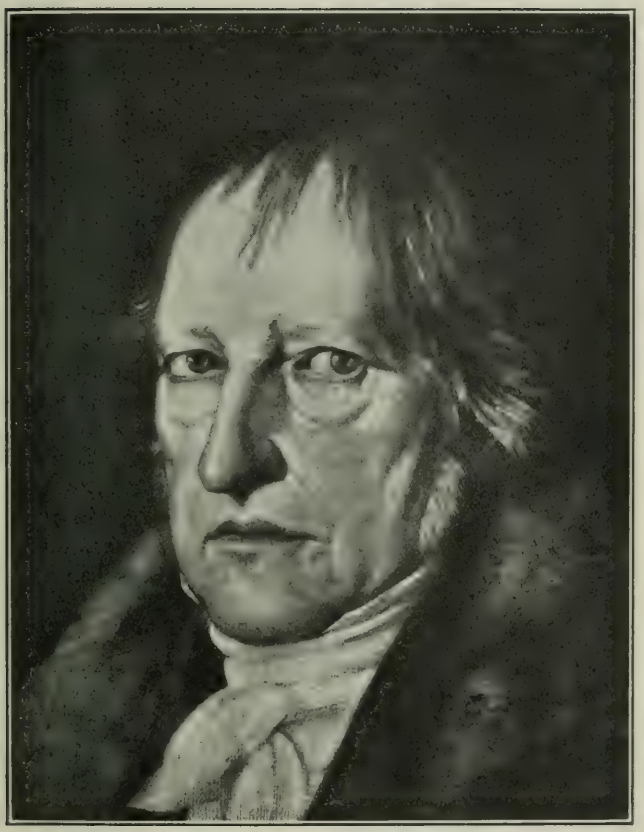
History, according to the view here unfolded, is the gradual self-revelation of God, or the Absolute, in whom Nature and Spirit are united and identified, who never is nor can be, but always is to be. Meanwhile the supreme ideal is not that ever-increasing mastery of nature by man which Fichte contemplated, but their reconciliation as achieved by Art. For just as natural philosophy carried an element of consciousness into the material universe, so æstheticism recognises a corresponding element of unconscious creation in the supreme works of artistic genius where spirit reaches its highest and best. Here Schelling appears as the philosopher of Romanticism, a movement that characterised German thought from 1795 to 1805, and is known to ourselves by the faded and feeble image of it exhibited in a certain section of English society nearly a century later. Beginning with a more cultivated intelligence of Hellenic antiquity, this movement rapidly grew into a new appreciation of medieval culture, falsely supposed to have given more scope to individuality than modern civilisation, and then into a search for ever-varying sources of excitement or distraction in the whole history, art, and literature of past or present times, religion being at last singled out as the vitalising principle of all.

Singularly enough, Fichte accepted the *Transcendental Idealism* as an orthodox exposition of his own philosophy. But its composition seems to have given Schelling the consciousness of his own independence. Soon afterwards he defined the new position as a philosophy of Identity or of Indifference. Nature and Spirit, like Spinoza's Thought and Extension, were all the same and all one—that is to say, in their totality or in the Absolute. For, considered as appearances,

they might present quantitative differences determined by the varying preponderance of the objective or of the subjective side. In this way Schelling found himself able to repeat his fanciful construction of the forces and forms of nature in successive triads under new names. The essential departure from Fichte, who repudiated the Philosophy of Identity with undisguised contempt, was that it practically repudiated the idea of an eternal progress in man's ever-growing mastery of nature. But, in spite of all disclaimers, the master silently followed his former disciple's evolution in the direction of a pantheistic monism. His later writings represent God no longer as the moral order of the world, but, like Spinoza, as the world's eternal Being, of which man's knowledge is the reflected image. Finally, both philosophers accepted the Christian doctrines of the Fall, the Incarnation, and the Trinity as mythical symbols of an eternal process in which God, after becoming alienated from himself in the material universe, returns to himself in man's consciousness of identity with the Absolute. Instead of the rather abrupt method of position, negation, and re-affirmation known as Thesis, Antithesis, and Synthesis, we have here the more fluid process of a spiral movement, departing from and returning to itself. And this was to be the very mainspring of the system that next comes up for consideration.

Hegel.

G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831), in the opinion of some good judges Germany's greatest philosopher, was, like Schelling, a Suabian, and intimately associated with his younger contemporary, first at Tübingen and afterwards at Jena, where the two friends jointly conducted



HEGEL

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a philosophical review. But they gradually drifted apart. Hegel was not a romanticist, but a classic; not a naturalist, but a humanist. Largely influenced by Greek thought and Greek literature, for which he continued to be an enthusiast through life, he readily accepted, as against Kant and Fichte, the change from a purely subjective to an objective point of view. But, although he gave some attention to physical science, Hegel was less interested in it than his colleague, with whose crude and fanciful metaphysics he also failed to sympathise. With the publication of Hegel's first important work, the *Phenomenology of Mind* (1807), things came to a breach; for its preface amounts to a declaration of war against the philosophy of Romanticism. Schelling himself is not named; but there is no mistaking the object of certain picturesque references to "exploding the Absolute on us," and "the darkness in which every cow is black." Next year Hegel became what we should call headmaster of a public school at Nuremberg, filling that post for eight years, during which his greatest work, the *System of Logic*, in three volumes, was composed and published. He then obtained a chair of philosophy at Heidelberg, passing thence to Berlin in 1818, where he taught until his death by cholera in 1831. David Strauss, who saw the revered teacher a few days before the fatal seizure, describes him first as he appeared in the lecture-room, "looking ever so old, bent and coughing"; then in his home, "looking ten years younger, with clear blue eyes, and showing the most beautiful white teeth when he smiled." He had published a summary of his whole system, under the name of an *Encyclopædia of the Philosophical Sciences*, in 1817, and a *Philosophy of Law*—which is really a treatise on Government—in 1821. His

sympathies were with bureaucratic absolutism in a modernised form, with Napoleon against the German patriots, with the restored Prussian Government against the new Liberalism, with English Toryism against the Whigs of the Reform Bill, and finally with the admirers of war against the friends of peace.

Hegel's collected works, published after his death, fill over twenty good-sized volumes. Besides the treatises already mentioned, they include his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, the *Philosophy of History*, the *Philosophy of Religion*, *Æsthetics*, etc., made up with much literary skill from the Professor's own notes and from the reports of his hearers. The most permanently valuable of these is the *Æsthetics;* but any student desirous of getting a notion of Hegelianism at first hand had better begin with the *Philosophy of History*, of which there is a good and cheap English translation in one of Bohn's Libraries. Some general points of view serving to connect the system with its predecessors are all that room can be found for here.

As compared with Kant, Hegel is distinguished above all by his complete abjuration of the agnostic standpoint in epistemology. "The universe is penetrable to thought": an unknowable thing in itself does not exist. Indeed, the intelligible reality of things is just what we know best; the unaccountable residuum, if any, lurks in the details of their appearance. So also in Greek philosophy Hegel holds that the truth was not in the ideal world of Plato, but in the self-realising Forms of Aristotle. As against Fichte, Hegel will not allow that the reconciliation of the subjective with the objective is an infinitely "far-off divine event"; on the contrary, it is a process being continually realised by ourselves and all about us. In his homely expression, the very

animals as they eat turn their food into consciousness, in utter disregard of prejudice. But Fichte's condemnation of Schelling's Indifferentism is quite right. *The Absolute is Mind.* Nature exists only as the lower stage, whence Spirit emerges to contradict, to confront, and to explain her as the necessary preparation for his supreme self-assertion. And Fichte was right in working out his system by the dialectical method of contradiction and solution, as against the dogmatism that summarily decrees the Absolute, without taking the trouble to reason it out, in imitation of the plan pursued by the universe in becoming conscious of itself.

The most portentous thing about Hegel's philosophy is this notion of the world's having, so to speak, argued itself into existence. To rationalise the sum of being, to explain, without assumptions, why there should be anything, and then why it should be as we know it, had been a problem suggested by Plato and solved rather summarily by Spinoza's challenge to conceive Infinite Power as non-existing. Hegel is more patient and ingenious ; but, after all, his superiority merely consists in spinning the web of arbitrary dialectic so fine that we can hardly see the thread. The root-idea is to identify, or rather to confuse, causal evolution with logic. The chain of causes and effects that constitutes the universe is made out to be one with the series of reasons and consequents by which the conclusion is demonstrated. As usual, the equation is effected by a transference of terms from each side to the other. The categories and processes of logic are credited with a life and movement that belongs only to the human reasoner operating with them. And the moving, interacting masses of which the material universe consists are represented as parties to a dialectical

discussion in which one denies what the other asserts until it is discovered, on lifting the argument to a higher plane, that after all they are agreed. Nor is this all. The world as we know it is composed of co-existent elements grouped together or distinguished according to their resemblances and differences as so many natural kinds ; and of successive events linked together as causes and effects. But while there is no general law of coexistence except such as may be derived from the collocation of the previously existing elements whence they are derived, there *is* a law of causal succession—namely, this, that the quantities of mass and energy involved are conserved without loss or gain through all time. Now, Hegel's way of rationalising or, in plainer words, accounting for the coexistent elements and their qualities, is to bring them under a supposed law of complementary opposition, revived from Heracleitus, according to which everything necessarily involves the existence, both in thought and reality, of its contradictory. And the same principle is applied to causal succession—a proceeding which would be fatal to the scientific law of conservation.

There is another way of rationalising experience—namely, the theological hypothesis of a supreme intelligence by which the world was created and is governed with a view to the attainment of some ultimate good. And there is a sort of teleology in Hegel evidently inspired by his religious education. But the two do not mean the same thing. For he places conscious reason not at the beginning but at the end of evolution. The rationality of things is immanent, not transcendent. Purposes somehow work retrospectively so as to determine the course of events towards a good end. That end is self-consciousness—not yours or mine, but the

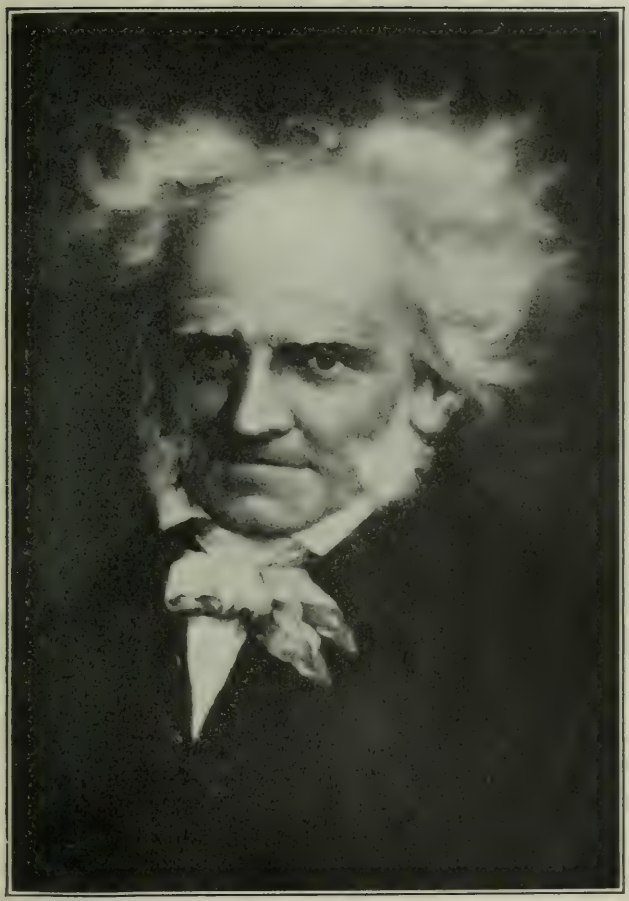
world-spirit's consciousness and possession of itself. And this is reached in four ways: in Art by intuition, in Religion by representation, in Philosophy by conception, in History and Politics by the realisation of righteousness through the agency of the modern State.

Hegel looked on this world and this life of ours as the only world and the only life. When Heine pointed to the starry skies he told the young poet that the stars were a brilliant leprosy on the face of the heavens, and met the appeal for future compensation with the sarcastic observation: "So you expect a trinkgeld for nursing your sick mother and for not poisoning your brother!"

German historians have justly extolled the ingenuity, the subtlety, the originality, the systematising power—unequalled since Aristotle—and the enormous knowledge of their country's chief idealist. But this, after all, amounts to no more than claiming for Hegel that much of what he said is true and that much is new. The vital question is whether what is new is also true—and this is more than they seem prepared to maintain.

Schopenhauer.

The leaders of the party known in the fourth and fifth decades of the last century as Young Germany, among whom Heinrich Heine (1797–1856) was the most brilliant and famous, were more or less associated with the Hegelian school. They were, however, what Hegel was not, political revolutionists with a tendency to Socialism; while their religious rationalism, unlike his, was openly proclaimed. The temporary collapse in 1849 of the movement they initiated brought discredit on idealism as represented by Germany's classic philosophers, which also had been seriously damaged by



SCHOPENHAUER

the luminous criticism of Trendelenburg, the neo-Aristotelian professor at Berlin (1802–1872).

At this crisis attention was drawn to the long-neglected writings of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), which then attained a vogue that they never since have lost. The son of a Hamburg banker and of a literary lady whose novels enjoyed some reputation in their day, he was placed from the beginning in a position of greater material and social independence than usually falls to the lot of German thinkers; and to this, combined with the fact that he failed entirely as a university teacher, it is partly due that he wrote about philosophy not like a pedant, but like a man of the world. At the same time the German professors, resenting the intrusion of an outsider on their privileged domain, were strong enough to prevent the reading public from ever hearing of Schopenhauer's existence until an article in the *Westminster Review* (April, 1853) astonished Germany by the revelation that she possessed a thinker whom the man in the street could understand.

Schopenhauer found his earliest teachers of philosophy in Plato and Kant. He then attended Fichte's lectures at Berlin. At some uncertain date—probably soon after taking his doctor's degree in 1813—at the suggestion of an Orientalist he took up the study of the Vedanta system. All these various influences converged to impress him with the belief that the things of sense are a delusive appearance under which a fundamental reality lies concealed. According to Hegel, the reality is reason; but the Romanticists, with Schelling at their head, never accepted his conclusion, thinking of the absolute rather as a blind, unconscious substance; still less could it please

Schopenhauer, who sought for the supreme good under the form of happiness conceived as pleasure unalloyed by pain. A gloomy and desponding temperament combined, as in the case of Byron and Rousseau, with passionately sensuous instincts and anti-social habits, debarred him from attaining it. The loss of a large part of his private fortune, and the world's refusal to recognise his genius, completed what natural temperament had begun; and it only remained for the philosophy of the Upanishads to give a theoretic sanction to the resulting state of mind by teaching that all existence is in itself an evil—a position which placed him in still more thoroughgoing antagonism to Hegel.

It will be remembered that Kant's criticism had denied the human mind all knowledge of things in themselves, and that the post-Kantian systems had been so many efforts to get at the Absolute in its despite. But none had stated the question at issue so clearly as Schopenhauer put it, or answered it in such luminous terms. Like theirs, his solution is idealist; but the idealism is constructed on new lines. If we know nothing else, we know ourselves; only it has to be ascertained what exactly we are. Hegel said that the essence of consciousness is reason, and that reason is the very stuff of which the world is made. No, replies Schopenhauer, that is a one-sided scholastic view. Much the most important part of ourselves is *not* reason, but that very unreasonable thing called will—that aimless, hopeless, infinite, insatiable craving which is the source of all our activity and of all our misery as well. *This* is the thing-in-itself, the timeless, inextended entity behind all phenomena, come to the consciousness of itself, but also of its utter futility, in man.

The cosmic will presents itself to us objectively under the form of the great natural forces—gravitation, heat, light, electricity, chemical affinity, etc.; then as the organising power of life in vegetables and animals; finally as human self-consciousness and sociability. These, Schopenhauer says, are what is really meant by the Platonic ideas, and they figure in his philosophy as first differentiations of the primordial will, coming between its absolute unity and the individualised objects and events that fill all space and time. It is the function of architecture, plastic art, painting, and poetry to give each of these dynamic ideas, singly or in combination, its adequate interpretation for the æsthetic sense. One art alone brings us a direct revelation of the real world, and that is music. Musical compositions have the power to express not any mere ideal embodiment of the underlying will, but the will itself in all its majesty and unending tragic despair.

Schopenhauer's theory of knowledge is given in the essay by which he obtained his doctor's degree, *On the Four-fold Root of the Sufficient Reason*. Notwithstanding this rather alarming title, it is a singularly clear and readable work. The standpoint is a simplification of Kant's *Critique*. The objects of consciousness offer themselves to the thinking, acting subject as grouped presentations in which there is "nothing sudden, nothing single." (1) When a new object appears to us, it must have a cause, physical, physiological, or psychological; and this we call the reason why it becomes. (2) Objects are referred to concepts of more or less generality, according to the logical rules of definition, classification, and inference; that is the reason of their being known. (3) Objects are mathematically determined by their position relatively to

other objects in space and time; that is the reason of their being. (4) Practical objects or ends of action are determined by motives; the motive is the reason why one thing rather than another is done.

The last "sufficient reason" takes us to ethics. Schopenhauer agrees with Kant in holding that actions considered as phenomena are strictly determined by motives, so much so that a complete knowledge of a man's character and environment would enable us to predict his whole course of conduct through life. Nevertheless, each man, as a timeless subject, is and knows himself to be free. To reconcile these apparently conflicting positions we must accept Plato's theory that each individual's whole fate has been determined by an ante-natal or transcendental choice for which he always continues responsible. Nevertheless, cases of religious "conversion" and the like prove that the eternal reality of the Will occasionally asserts itself in radical transformations of character and conduct.

In ethics Schopenhauer distinguishes between two ideals which may be called "relative" and "absolute" good. Relative good agrees with the standard of what in England is known as Universalistic Hedonism —the greatest pleasure combined with the least pain for all sensitive beings, each agent counting for no more than one. Personally passionate, selfish, and brutal, Schopenhauer still had a righteous abhorrence of cruelty to animals; whereas Kant had no such feeling. But positive happiness is a delusion, and no humanity can appreciably diminish the amount of pain produced by vital competition—recognised by our philosopher before Darwin—in the world. Therefore Buddhism is right, and the higher morality bids us extirpate the

will-to-live altogether by ascetic practices and meditation on the universal vanity of things. Suicide is not allowed, for while annihilating the intelligence it would not exclude some fresh incarnation of the will. And the last dying wish of Schopenhauer was that the end of this life might be the end of all living for him.

Herbart.

J. F. Herbart (1776–1841) occupies a peculiar position among German idealists. Like the others, he distinguishes between reality and appearance; and, like Schopenhauer in particular, he altogether rejects Hegel's identification of reality with reason. But, alone among post-Kantian metaphysicians, he is a pluralist. According to him, things-in-themselves, the eternal existents underlying all phenomena, are not one, but many. So far his philosophy is a return to the pre-Kantian system of Wolf and Leibniz; but whereas the monads of Leibniz were credited with an inward principle of evolution carrying them for ever onward through an infinite series of progressive changes, Herbart pushes his metaphysical logic to the length of denying all change and all movement to the eternal entities of which reality is made up.

Herbart is entitled to the credit—whatever it may be worth—of devising a system unlike every other in history; for while Hegel has a predecessor in Heracleitus, his rival combines the Eleatic immobilism with a pluralism that is all his own. It is not, however, on these paradoxes that his reputation rests, but on more solid services as a psychologist and an educationalist. Without any acquaintance, as would seem, with the work doing in Britain, Herbart discarded the old faculty psychology, conceiving mentality as made up

of "presentations," among which a constant competition for the field of consciousness is going on; and it is to this view that such terms as "inhibition" and "threshold of consciousness" are due. And the enormous prominence now given to the idea of value in ethics may be traced back to the teaching of a thinker whom he greatly influenced, F. E. Beneke (1798–1854).

Chapter V.

THE HUMANISTS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The philosophical movement of the nineteenth century, after the collapse of German idealism, has not been dominated by any single master or any single direction to anything like the same extent as its predecessors. But if we are called on to select the dominant note by which all its products have been more or less coloured and characterised, none more impressive than the note of Humanism can be named. As applied to the culture of the Renaissance, humanism meant a tendency to concentrate interest on this world rather than on the next, using classic literature as the best means of understanding what man had been and again might be. At the period on which we are entering human interests again become ascendant; but they assume the widest possible range, claiming for their dominion the whole of experience—all that has ever been done or known or imagined or dreamed or felt. Hegel's inventory, in a sense, embraced all this; but Hegel had a way of packing his trunk that sometimes crushed the contents out of recognition, and a way of opening it that few could understand. Besides, much was left out of the trunk that could ill be spared by mankind.

Aristotle has well said that the soul is in a way everything; and as such its analysis, under the name of

psychology, has entered largely into the philosophy of the century. Theory of knowledge, together with logic, has figured copiously in academic courses, with the result of putting what is actually known before the student in a new and interesting light; but with the result also of developing so much pedantry and scepticism as to give many besides dull fools the impression that divine philosophy is both crabbed and harsh.

The French Eclectics.

In the two centuries after Descartes France, so great in science, history, and literature, had produced no original philosopher, although general ideas derived from English thought were extensively circulated for the purpose of discrediting the old order in Church and State. When this work had been done with a thoroughness going far beyond the intention of the first reformers a reaction set in, and the demand arose for something more conservative than the so-called sensualism and materialistic atheism of the pre-revolutionary times. A certain originality and speculative disinterestedness must be allowed to Maine de Biran (1766–1824), who, some years after Fichte—but, as would seem, independently of him—referred to man's voluntary activity as a source of *à priori* knowledge. A greater immediate impression was produced by Royer-Collard (1763–1845), who, as Professor at the Sorbonne in 1811, imported the common-sense spiritualism of Reid (1710–1796) as an antidote to the then reigning theories of Condillac (1715–1780), who, improving on Locke, abolished reflection as a distinct source of our ideas. Then came Victor Cousin (1792–1867), a brilliant rhetorician, and, after Madame de Staël, the first to popularise German philosophy in France. As

Professor at the Sorbonne in the last years of the Bourbon monarchy he distinctly taught a pantheistic Absolutism compounded of Schelling and Hegel; but, whether from conviction or opportunism, this was silently withdrawn, and a so-called eclectic philosophy put in its place. According to Cousin, in all countries and all ages, from ancient India to modern Europe, speculation has developed under the four contrasted forms of sensualism, idealism, scepticism, and mysticism. Each is true in what it asserts, false in what it denies, and the right method is to preserve the positive while rejecting the negative elements of all four. But neither the master nor his disciples have ever consistently answered the vital question, what those elements are.

Hamilton and the Philosophy of the Conditioned.

Among other valuable contributions to the history of philosophy, Victor Cousin had lectured very agreeably on the philosophy of Kant, accepting the master's arguments for the apriorism of space and time, but rejecting his reduction of them to mere subjective forms as against common sense. He had not gone into Kant's destructive criticism of all metaphysics, and this was now to be turned against him by an unexpected assailant. Sir William Hamilton (1788–1856), afterwards widely celebrated as Professor of Logic and Metaphysics at Edinburgh, began his philosophical career by an essay on "The Philosophy of the Conditioned" in the *Edinburgh Review* for October, 1829, controverting the Absolutism both of Cousin and of his master, Schelling. The reviewer had acquired some not very accurate knowledge of Kant in Germany ten years before; and he uses this, with other rather flimsy

erudition, to establish the principle that *to think is to condition*, and that therefore the Absolute cannot be thought—cannot be conceived. Hamilton enjoyed the reputation of having read "all that mortal man had ever written about philosophy"; but this evidently did not include Hegel, who certainly had performed the feat declared to be impossible. Thirty years later the philosophy of the conditioned attained a sudden but transient notoriety, thanks to the use made of it by Hamilton's disciple, H. L. Mansel, in his Bampton Lectures on *The Limits of Religious Thought* (1858). The object of these was to prove that, as we know nothing about Things-in-themseves, nothing told about God in the Bible or the Creeds can be rejected *à priori* as incredible. As an apology, the book failed utterly, its only effect being to prepare public opinion for the Agnosticism of Herbert Spencer and Huxley.

Auguste Comte.

The brilliant audiences that hung spell-bound on the lips of Victor Cousin as he unrolled before them the Infinite, the Finite, and the relation between the two, little knew that France's only great philosopher since Descartes was working in obscurity among them. Auguste Comte (1798–1857), the founder of Positivism, belonged to a Catholic and Legitimist family. By profession a mathematical teacher, he fell early under the influence of the celebrated St. Simon, a mystical socialist who exercised a powerful attraction on others besides Comte. The connection lasted four years, when they quarrelled; indeed Comte's character was such as to make permanent co-operation with him impossible, except on terms of absolute agreement with his opinions and submission to his will. At a

subsequent period he obtained some fairly well-paid employment at the École Polytechnique, but lost it again owing to the injurious terms in which he spoke

Auguste Comte.

of his colleagues. In his later years he lived on a small annuity made up by contributions from his admirers.

Auguste Comte disliked and despised Plato, altogether preferring Aristotle to him as a philosopher; but it is fundamentally as a Platonist, not as an Aristotelian, that he should himself be classed — in this sense, that he valued knowledge above all as the means towards reconstituting society on the basis of an ideal life. And this is the first reason why his philosophy is called positive — to distinguish it as reconstructive from the purely negative thought of the Revolution. The second reason is to distinguish it as dealing with real facts from the figments of theology and the abstractions of metaphysics. Positive science explains natural events neither by the intervention of supernatural beings nor by the mutual relations of hypostasised concepts, but by verifiable laws of succession and resemblance. Turgot was the first to distinguish the theological, metaphysical, and mechanical interpretations as successive stages of a historical evolution (1750); Hume was the first to single out the relations of orderly succession and resemblance as the essential elements of real knowledge (1739); Comte, with the synthetic genius of the nineteenth century, first combined these isolated suggestions with a wealth of other ideas into a vast theory of human progress set out in the fifth and sixth volumes of his *Philosophie Positive*—the best sketch of universal history ever written.

The positive sciences fall into two great divisions—the concrete, dealing with the actual phenomena as presented in space and time; the abstract, which alone concern philosophy, dealing with their laws. The most important of the abstract sciences is Sociology, claimed by Comte as his own special creation. The study of this demands a previous knowledge of biology, psychology

being dismissed as a metaphysical delusion and phrenology put in its place. The science of life presupposes Chemistry, before which comes Physics, presupposing Astronomy, and, as the basis of all, Mathematics, divided into the calculus and geometry. At a later period Morality was placed as a seventh fundamental science at the head of the whole hierarchy.

At a first glance some serious flaws reveal themselves in the imposing logic of this scheme. Astronomy as a concrete science ought to have been excluded from the series, its admission being apparently due to the historical circumstance that the most general laws of physics were ascertained through the study of celestial phenomena. But on the same ground geology can no longer be excluded, as its records led to the recognition of the evolution of life ; or should evolution be referred to the concrete sciences of zoology and botany, by parity of reasoning human progress should be treated as a branch of universal history—which, in fact, is what Comte makes it in his fifth and sixth volumes. It would have been better had he also studied social statics on the historical method. As it is, the volume in which the conditions of social equilibrium are supposed to be established contains only one chapter on the subject, and that is very meagre, consisting of some rather superficial observations on family life and the division of labour. No doubt the matter receives a far more thorough discussion in the author's later work, *Politique Positive*. But this merely embodies his own plan of reorganisation for the society of the future, and therefore should count not as science, but as art.

The Positivist theory of social dynamics is that all

branches of knowledge pass through three successive stages already described as the theological, the metaphysical, and the scientific. And this advance is accompanied by a parallel evolution on the governmental side from the military to the industrial régime, with a revolutionary or transitional period answering to metaphysical philosophy. To this scheme it might be objected that the parallelism is merely accidental. A scientific view of nature and a profound knowledge of her laws is no doubt far more conducive to industry than a superstitious view ; but it is also more favourable to the successful prosecution of war, which, indeed, always has been an industry like another. Nor, to judge by modern experience, does it look as if a government placed in the hands of a country's chief capitalists—which was what Comte proposed—would be less militant in its general disposition than the parliamentary governments which he condemns as "metaphysical." In fact, it is by theologians and metaphysicians that our modern horror of war has been inspired rather than by scientists.

The great idea of Comte's life, that the positive sciences, philosophically systematised, are destined to supply the basis of a new religion surpassing Catholicism in its social efficacy, seems a delusion really inherited from one of his pet aversions, Plato. It arose from a profound misconception of what Catholicism had done, and a misconception, equally profound, of the means by which its priesthood worked. In spite of Comte's denials, the leverage was got not by appeals to the heart, but by appeals to that future judgment with which the preaching of righteousness and temperance was associated by St. Paul, his supposed precursor in religion, as Aristotle was his precursor in philosophy.

The worship of Humanity, or, as it has been better called, the Service of Man, is a great and inspiring thought. Only it is not a religion, but a metaphysical idea, derived by Comte from the philosophers of the eighteenth century, and by them through imperial Rome from the Humanists and Stoics of ancient Athens.

J. S. Mill.

John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) was, like Comte, a Platonist in the sense of valuing knowledge chiefly as an instrument of social reform. He was indeed bred up by his father, James Mill (1773–1836), and by Jeremy Bentham as a prophet of the new Utilitarianism as Comte was, to some extent, trained by St. Simon to substitute a new order for that which the Revolution had destroyed. Mill, however, had been educated on the lines of Greek liberty rather than in the tradition of Roman authority; while both were largely affected by the Romanticism current in their youth. The worship of women, revived from the age of chivalry, entered into the romantic movement; and it may be mentioned in this connection that Mill calls Mrs. Taylor, the lady with whom he fell in love at twenty-four and married eighteen years later, "the inspirer and in part the author of all" that was best in his writings; while Comte refers his religious conversion to Madame Clotilde de Vaux, the object of his adoration in middle life. It seems probable, however, from the little we know of Mrs. Taylor—whom Carlyle credits with "the keenest insight and the royallest volition"—that her influence was the reverse of Clotilde's. If anything, she attached Mill still more firmly to the cause of pure reason.

It has been mentioned how Kant's metaphysical

agnosticism was played out by Hamilton against Cousin. A little later Whewell, the Cambridge historian of physical science, imported Kant's theory of necessary truth in opposition to the empiricism of popular English thought, and Kant's Categorical Imperative in still more express contradiction to Bentham's utilitarian morality. Now Mill, educated as he had been on the associationist psychology and in the central line of the English epistemological tradition, rejected the German apriorism as false in itself, while more particularly hating it as, in his opinion, a dangerous enemy to all social progress. For to him what people called their intuitions, whether theoretic or practical, were merely the time-honoured prejudices in which they had been brought up, and the contradictory of which they could not conceive. Comte similarly interpreted the metaphysical stage of thought as the erection into immutable principles of certain abstract ideas whose value—if they had any—was merely relative and provisional. Mill, with his knowledge of history, might have remembered that past thought, beginning with Plato, shows no such connection between intuitionism and immobility or reaction, while such experientialists as Hobbes and Hume have been political Tories. But in his own time the *à priori* philosophy went hand in hand with conservatism in Church and State, so he set himself to explode it in his *System of Logic* (1843).

Mill's *Logic*, the most important English contribution to philosophy since Hume, is based on Hume's theory of knowledge, amended and supplemented by some German and French ideas. It is conceded to Kant that mathematical truths are synthetic, not analytic. It is not contained in the idea of two and

two that they make four, nor in the idea of two straight lines that they cannot enclose a space. Such propositions are real additions to our knowledge; but it is only experience that justifies us in accepting them. What constitutes their peculiar certainty is that they can be verified by trial on imagined numbers and lines, without reference to external objects. But by what right we generalise from mental experience to all experience Mill does not explain. Hume's analysis of causation into antecedence and sequence of phenomena is accepted by Mill as it was accepted by Kant; but the law that every change must have a cause is affirmed, in adhesion to Dr. Thomas Brown (1778–1820), with more distinctness than by Hume. As Laplace put it, the whole present state of the universe is a product of its whole preceding state. But we only know this truth by experience; and we can conceive a state of things where phenomena succeed one another by a different law or without any law at all. Mill himself was ready to believe that causation did not obtain at some very remote point of space; though what difference remoteness could make, except we suppose it to be causal—which would be a reassertion of the law—he does not explain; nor yet what warrant we have for assuming that causation holds through all time, or at any future moment of time.

Next to the law of universal causation inductive science rests on the doctrine of natural kinds. The material universe is known to consist of a number of substances—namely, the chemical elements and their combinations, so constituted that a certain set of characteristic properties are invariably associated with an indefinite number of other properties. Thus, if in a strange country a certain mineral answers the usual

tests for arsenic, we know that a given dose of it will destroy life; and we are equally certain that if the spectroscopic examination of a new star shows the characteristic lines of iron, a metal possessing all the properties of iron as we find it in our mines is present in that distant luminary. According to Mill, we are justified in drawing that sweeping inference on the strength of a single well-authenticated observation, because we know by innumerable observations on terrestrial substances that natural kinds possessing such index qualities do exist, whereas there is not a single instance of a substance possessing those qualities without the rest.

For Mill, as for Hume, reality means states of consciousness and the relations between them. Matter he defines as a permanent possibility of sensation; mind as a permanent possibility of thought and feeling. But the latter definition is admittedly not satisfactory. For a stream of thoughts and feelings which is proved by memory to have the consciousness of itself seems to be something more than a mere stream. All explanations must end in an ultimate inexplicability. God may be conceived as a series of thoughts and feelings prolonged through eternity; and it is a logically defensible hypothesis that the order of nature was designed by such a being, although the amount of suffering endured by living creatures excludes the notion of a Creator at once beneficent and omnipotent. And if the Darwinian theory were established, the case for a designing intelligence would collapse. Personally Mill believed neither in a God nor in a future life.

In morals Mill may be considered the creator of what Henry Sidgwick, in his *Methods of Ethics* (1874), called Universalistic Hedonism. The English moralists of the

eighteenth century had set up the greatest happiness of the greatest number as the ideal end of action ; but they did not hold that each individual could be expected to pursue anything but his own happiness ; the object of Bentham (1748–1832) being to make the two coincide. Kant showed that the rule of right excluded any such accommodation, and a crisis in his own life led Mill to adopt the same conclusion. Afterwards he rather confused the issues by distinguishing between higher and lower pleasures, leaving experts to decide which were the pleasures to be preferred. The universalistic standard settles the question summarily by estimating pleasures according to their social utility.

Mill fully sympathised with Comte's demand for social reorganisation as a means towards the moral end. But, with his English and Protestant traditions, he had no faith in the creation of a new spiritual power with an elaborate religious code and ritual as the best machinery for the purpose. In his opinion, the claims of the individual to extended liberty of thought and action, not their restriction, were what first needed attention. Second to this—if second at all—came the necessity for reforming representative government on the lines of an enlarged franchise and a readjusted electoral system with plural suffrage determined by merit, votes for women, and a contrivance for giving minorities a weight proportioned to their numbers. The problem of poverty was to be dealt with by restrictions on the increase of population and on the amount of inheritable property, the maximum of which ought not to exceed a modest competence.

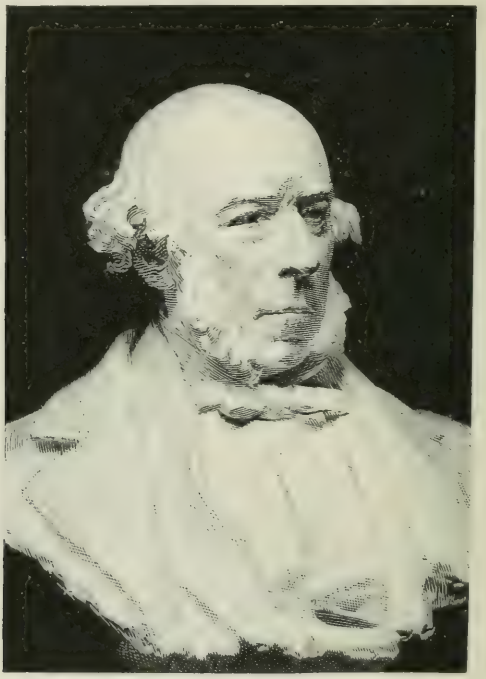
Among the noble characters presented by the history of philosophy we may distinguish between the heroic and the saintly types. To the former in modern

times belong Giordano Bruno, Fichte, and to some extent Comte ; to the latter, Spinoza, Berkeley, and Kant. To the second class we may surely add John Stuart Mill, whom Gladstone called "the saint of rationalism," and of whom Auguste Laugel said, "He was not sincere—he was sincerity itself."

Herbert Spencer.

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) was the son of a Nonconformist country schoolmaster, but was educated chiefly by his uncle Thomas, an Evangelical clergyman of the Church of England. A radical reformer of the old school, Thomas Spencer seems to have indoctrinated his youthful charge with the germinal principles afterwards generalised into a whole cosmic philosophy. He had a passion for justice realised under the form of liberty, individual responsibility, and self-help. In his opinion, until it was modified by private misfortunes, everything served everybody right. Beginning as an economical administrator of the new Poor Law, he at last became an advocate of its total abolition ; and, alone among fifteen thousand clergymen, he was an active member of the Anti-Corn Law League, besides supporting the separation of Church and State. At twenty-two Herbert Spencer accepted and summed up this policy under the form of a general hostility to State interference with individual liberty, supporting it by a reference to the reign of Natural Law in all orders of existence. In his first great work, *Social Statics*, the principle of *laissez-faire* received its full systematic development as the restriction of State action to the defence of liberty against internal and external aggression, the raising of taxes for any other purpose being unjust, as is also private ownership of

land, which is by nature the common heritage of all. Spencer subsequently came to abandon land nationalisation, probably from alarm at its socialistic implications.



HERBERT SPENCER.

The doctrine of natural law and liberty carried with it for Spencer a strong repugnance not only to protectionism in politics, but also to miracles in theology. The profession of journalism brought him into touch

with a freethinking set in London. Whether under their influence, or Shelley's, or by some spontaneous process, his religious convictions evaporated by twenty-eight into the agnosticism which thenceforth remained their permanent expression. There might or not be a First Cause ; if there was, we know nothing about it. At this stage Lyell's attempted refutation of Lamarck converted Spencer to the belief in man's derivation from some lower animal by a process of gradual adaptation. Thus the scion of an educationalist family came to interpret the whole history of life on our planet as an educative process.

It seemed, however, as if there was one fatal exception to the scheme of naturalistic optimism. The Rev. Thomas Malthus had originally published his *Essay on Population* (1798) as a telling answer to the "infidel" Godwin's *Political Justice* (1793), the bolder precursor of *Social Statics*. The argument was that the tendency of population to outrun the means of subsistence put human perfectibility out of the question. It had been suggested by the idealists, Mill among the number, that the difficulty might be obviated by habitual self-restraint on the part of married people. But Spencer, with great ingenuity, made the difficulty its own solution. The pressure of population on the means of subsistence is the source of all progress ; and of progress not only in discoveries and inventions, but also, through its increased exercise, in the instrument which effects them—that is, the human brain. Now, it is a principle of Aristotle's, revived by modern biology, that individuation is antagonistic to reproduction ; and increasing individuation is the very law of developing life, shown above all in the growing power of life's chief instrument, which is thought's organ, the brain. For, as Spencer proceeded

to show in his next work, the *Principles of Psychology*, life means a continuous series of adjustments of internal to external relations. Therefore the rate of multiplication must go on falling with the growth of intellectual and moral power until it only just suffices to balance the loss by death. The next step was to revive Laplace's nebular hypothesis, and to connect it through Lyell's uniformitarian geology with Lamarck's developmental biology, thereby extending the same evolutionary process through the whole history of the universe.

Nor was this all. Milne-Edwards, by another return to Aristotle, had pointed to the "physiological division of labour" as a mark of ascending organic perfection, to which Spencer adds integration of structure as its obverse side, at the same time extending the world-law, already made familiar in part through its industrial applications by Adam Smith, to all orders of social activity. Finally, differentiation and integration were stretched back from living to lifeless matter, thus bringing astronomy and geology, which had already entered into the causal series of cosmic transformations, under one common law of evolution; while at the same time, seeing it to be generally admitted that inorganic changes originated from the operation of purely mechanical forces, they suggested that mechanism, without teleology, could adequately explain organic evolution also.

Finally came the great discovery of Darwin and Wallace, with its extension of Malthus's law to the whole world of living things. Spencer had just touched, without grasping, the same idea years before. He now gladly accepted Natural Selection as supplementing without superseding Lamarck's theory of spontaneous adaptation.

To complete even in outline the vast sweep of his projected Synthetic Philosophy two steps more remained for Spencer to take. The law of evolution had to be brought under the recently-discovered law of the Conservation of Energy, or, as he called it, the Persistence of Force, and the whole of unified science had to be reconciled with religion. The first problem was solved by interpreting evolution as a redistribution of matter and motion—a process in which, of course, energy is neither lost nor gained. The second problem was solved by reducing faith and knowledge to the common denominator of Agnosticism—a method that found more favour with Positivists (in the wide sense) than with Christian believers.

Herbert Spencer was disappointed to find that people took more interest in the portico (as he called it in a letter to the present writer)—that is to say, the metaphysical introduction to his philosophical edifice—than in its interior. He probably had some suspicion that the portico was mere lath and plaster, while he felt sure that the columns and architraves behind it were of granite. The public, however, besides their perennial interest in religion, might be excused for giving more attention to even a baroque exterior with some novelty about it than to the formalised eclecticism of what stood behind it. Unfortunately, they soon found that the alleged reconciliation was a palpable sham. Religion is nothing if not a revelation, and an unknowable God is no God at all. Even the pretended proofs of that poor residual deity involved their author in the transparent self-contradiction of calling the universe the manifestation of an Unknowable Power. Then the relations between this Power (such as it was) and the Energy (or Force) whose conservation (or persistence) was the very first

of First Principles seemed hard to adjust. Either energy is created, or it is not. In the one case, what becomes of its eternity? in the other case, what need is there to assume a Power (knowable or not) behind it? Science will not shrink back before such a phantom, nor will Religion adore it.

Such faulty building in the portico prepares us for somewhat unsteady masonry within; and in fact none holds together except what has been transported bodily from other temples. In the past history of the universe, considered as a "rearrangement of matter and motion," disintegration and assimilation play quite as great a part as integration and differentiation. Such formulas have no advantage over the metaphysical systematisation of Aristotle, and they give us as little power either to predict or to direct. Will war be abolished at some future time, or property equalised or abolished, or morality exalted, or religion superseded? Spencer was ready with his answer; but the law of evolution could not prove it true. Nevertheless, his name will long be associated with evolution as a world-wide process, though neither in the way of original discovery nor of complete generalisation, and far less of successful application to modern problems; but rather of diffusion and popularisation, even as other valuable ideas have been impressed on the public mind by other philosophies at a vast expense of ingenuity, knowledge, and labour, but not at greater expense than the eventual gain has been worth.

The English Hegelians.

Hegel's philosophy first drew attention in England through its supposed connection with Strauss's mythic theory of the Gospels and Baur's theory of New

Testament literature as a product of party conflicts and compromises in the primitive Church. Rightly interpreted as a system of Pantheism, it was decried and ridiculed by orthodox theologians in the name of religion and common sense, while cherished by the advanced Broad Church as a means of symbolising away the creeds they continued to repeat. Then the triumph of Spencer's Agnosticism in the middle Victorian period (1864–1874) suggested an appeal to a logic whose object had been to resolve the negations of eighteenth-century enlightenment in the synthesis of a higher unity. The first pronunciation in this sense was *The Secret of Hegel* (1865), by Dr. Hutchison Stirling (1820–1909), a writer of geniality and genius, who, writing from the Hegelian standpoint, tried to represent the English rationalists of the day as a superficial and retrograde school. It was a bold but unsuccessful attempt to plant the banner of the Hegelian Right on British soil. By attacking Darwinism Stirling put himself out of touch with the general movement of thought. Professor William Wallace (1844–1897), John Caird (1820–1898), and his brother Edward Caird (1835–1908) inclined more or less to the Left, as also does Lord Haldane (*b.* 1865) in his *Gifford Lectures* (1903); and all have the advantage over Stirling of writing in a clearer if less picturesque style.

T. H. Green (1836–1882) is sometimes quoted as a Hegelian, but his intellectual affinities were rather with Fichte. According to him, reality is the thought of an Eternal Consciousness, of which personality need not be predicated, while the endless duration of personal spirits seems to be denied. Another idealist, F. H. Bradley (*b.* 1846)—perhaps the greatest living English thinker

—develops in his *Appearance and Reality* (1893) a metaphysical system which, though Absolutist in form, is, to me at least, in substance practically indistinguishable from the dogmatic Agnosticism of Herbert Spencer, and even more destructive of the popular Theism. Finally the writings of Dr. J. E. McTaggart (*b.* 1866), teaching as they do a doctrine of developmental personal immortality without a God, show a tendency to combine Hegel with Lotze.

The German Eclectics.

By general consent the most serious and influential of German systematic thinkers since Hegel is R. H. Lotze (1817–1881). His philosophy is built up of materials derived in varying proportions from all his German predecessors, the most distinctive idea being pluralism, probably suggested in the first instance by Herbart, whom he succeeded as Professor at Göttingen. But Lotze discards the rigid monads of his master for the more intelligible soul-substances of Leibniz—or rather of Bruno—whose example he also follows in his attempt to combine pluralism with monism. Very strenuous efforts are made to give the unifying principle the character of a personal God; but the suspicion of a leaning to Pantheism is not altogether eluded.

More original and far more uncompromising is the work of Ed. v. Hartmann (1842–1906). Personally he enjoyed the twofold distinction—whatever it may be worth—of having served as an officer for a short time in the Prussian army, and of never having taught in a university. His great work, published at twenty-seven, appeared under the telling title of the *Philosophy of the Unconscious*. It won immediate popularity, and reached its eleventh edition in 1904. Hartmann adopts,

with some slight attenuation, Schopenhauer's pessimism, and his metaphysics with a considerable emendation. In this new version the world is still conceived as Will and Representation ; but whereas for Schopenhauer the intellective side had been subordinated to the volitional, with Hartmann the two are co-equal and intimately united, together forming that "Unconscious" which is the new Absolute. In this way Reason again becomes, what it had been with Hegel, a great cosmic principle ; only as the optimistic universe had argued itself *into* existence, so conversely the pessimistic universe has to argue itself *out of* existence. As in the process of developing differentiation, the volitional and intellective sides draw apart, the Unconscious becomes self-conscious, and thus awakens to the terrible mistake it committed in willing to be. Thenceforth the whole of evolution is determined by the master-thought of how not to be. The problem is how to annul the creative Will. And the solution is to divide it into two halves so opposed that the one shall be the negation and destruction of the other. There will be then, not indeed a certainty, but an equal chance of definitive self-annihilation and eternal repose. Thus, the immediate duty for mankind, as also their predestined task, is the furtherance of scientific and industrial progress as a means towards this consummation, which is likewise their predestined end. A religious colouring is given to the process by representing it as an inverted Christian scheme in which man figures as the redeemer of God—*i.e.* the Absolute —from the unspeakable torments to which he is now condemned by the impossibility of satisfying his will.

Like Hartmann, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), the greatest writer of modern Germany, took his start from

Schopenhauer, but broke with pessimism at an early date, having come to disbelieve in the hedonism on which it is founded. His restless vanity drove him to improve on Darwinism by interpreting evolution as the means towards creating what he called the Superman—that is, a race as much superior to us as we are to the apes. Progress, however, is not to be in the direction of a higher morality, but of greater power—the Will-to-Power, not the Will-to-Live, being the essence of what is. Later in life Nietzsche revived the Stoic doctrine that events move, and have moved through all time, in a series of recurring cycles, each being the exact repetition of its predecessor. It is a worthless idea, and Nietzsche, who had been a Greek professor, must have known where he got it; but the megalomania to which he eventually succumbed prevented his recognising the debt. By a merited irony of fate this worshipper of the Napoleonic type will survive only as a literary moralist in the history of thought.

The modern revolt against metaphysical systemisation, with or without a theological colouring, took in Germany the form of two distinct philosophical currents. The first is scientific materialism, or, as some of its advocates prefer to call it, energism. This began about 1850, but boasts two great living representatives, the biologist Haeckel and the chemist Ostwald. In their practical aims these men are idealists; but their admission of space and time as objective realities beyond which there is nothing, and their repudiation of agnosticism, distinguish them from the French and English Positivists. The other and more powerful school is known as Neo-Kantianism. It numbers numerous adherents in the German universities, and also in those of France and Italy, representing various

shades of opinion united by a common reference to Kant's first Critique, dissociated from its concessions to deism, as the true starting-point of modern thought.

The Latest Developments.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century the interest in philosophy and the ability devoted to its cultivation have shown no sign of diminution. Two new doctrines in particular have become subjects of world-wide discussion. I refer to the theory of knowledge called Pragmatism, and to the metaphysics of Professor Henri Bergson. Both are of so revolutionary, so contentious, and so elusive a character as to preclude any discussion or even outline of the new solutions for old problems which they claim to provide. But I would recommend the study of both, and especially of Bergson, to all who imagine that the possibilities of speculation are exhausted, or that we are any nearer finality and agreement than when Heracleitus first glorified war as the father of all things, and contradiction as the central spring of life.

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BY

ALFRED W. BENN,

AUTHOR OF "THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH RATIONALISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY," "MODERN ENGLAND," ETC.

"Zarathustra has found no greater power on earth than good and evil."—FR. NIETZSCHE.

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TO

VERNON LEE

ACCESS

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PREFACE

THE title of this volume may possibly remind some readers of an expression—"Umwerthungen," in English "Transvaluations"—first brought into vogue by Nietzsche; the motto of the book is taken from Nietzsche; and one of the essays which it contains is devoted to a criticism of Nietzsche's ethics. Under less provocation than this, hasty or superficial reviewers might be tempted to label me as a Nietzschian. Under less provocation than this, quite friendly reviewers have actually labelled me as a Hegelian. If I know anything about my own opinion, I am neither the one nor the other. But, if I had to choose, of the two I had rather be called a Hegelian. And anyone who takes the trouble to read my study of the great immoralist will find that he is treated from the point of view of one who accepts in principle the traditional morality—

> As one compelled in spite of scorn
> To teach a truth he would not learn.

My re-estimates, in fact, where they depart from the views generally accepted, relate not so much to standards as to their application, and not so much to things as to persons. Thus the paper which has been put first, and which in some ways is most diametrically opposed to the current commonplaces, does not find the ethical value of Hellenism in any opposition to the highest modern ideals of conduct, but in its approach to or anticipation of what we cherish as most essential to modern civilisation. Of course, I am prepared to hear that there is nothing new about what I claim for the Greeks, that every scholar knew all this already. It may be so; but I am not aware that any scholar has said it in so many words; and I know one scholar who, writing some time after the first publication of my essay, dogmatically stated the exact contrary. Professor De Sanctis, the most recent Italian historian of old Rome, comparing together the different branches of the Aryan race, finds in the Greeks "a certain atrophy of the moral sense." When a man who has access to Homer and the tragedians can say this, neither would he be persuaded though one rose from the dead. It is not, therefore, in the vain hope of inducing Professor De Sanctis to reconsider his verdict, but because it may interest my less prejudiced readers,

that I venture to lay before them some very striking evidence on the subject derived from an unexpected quarter—the recently disinterred comedies of Menander. One of these, called *The Arbitration*, has for its argument the following story :—

> Charisios, a young Athenian of good family, has recently been married to Pamphila, a girl of his own class. Four months after the wedding Pamphila, unknown to her husband, gives birth to a child, of which Charisios, although unaware of his paternity, is the father. For in the course of a drunken frolic he had met and done violence to his future wife one dark night in the streets of Athens. Neither of them had seen the other's face, but in the struggle Pamphila had possessed herself of and retained a ring belonging to Charisios. On discovering what he supposes to be her ante-nuptial frailty, the young man separates from his wife and returns to his former associates. One of these, a slave-woman named Habrotonon, with whom he had once cohabited, gets hold of the ring and uses it to persuade Charisios that she has become the mother of a child by him. Her story reaches the ear of Pamphila's father, who, as some modern readers will be surprised to learn, is so scandalised by this evidence of his son-in-law's youthful misconduct as to propose that Pamphila, of whose misfortune he is ignorant, should immediately demand a separation. This, however, the young wife refuses to do, declaring that it is her wish to stand by her husband in good and evil fortune alike. Charisios accidentally overhears the conversation, and is so conscience-stricken by the contrast between his own resentment and the generous fidelity of his wife as in his

turn to forgive her supposed lapse from virtue, even before everything is happily cleared up by a disclosure of the real facts of the case.

Professor De Sanctis places his countrymen at the head of the whole Aryan race for the perfect balance of their mental qualities, among which, of course, moral feeling holds a leading position. Now, the Latin comic poet Terence wrote for an Italian audience, and, although Julius Cæsar called him a half Menander, we do not find in his plays, charming as they are, the faintest trace of the moral delicacy which is now shown to have been a distinctive trait of his Greek prototype.

The instance quoted does not stand alone. In another comedy, of which considerable fragments have recently been discovered, Menander introduces a girl, supposed to be of foreign birth, who as a consequence of her inferior social position has been living in concubinage with a soldier, and, having innocently provoked his jealousy, experiences very rough treatment from him. Being subsequently recognised as of Athenian parentage, her first impulse is to exclaim, "Then I shall be reconciled"; on which her father observes:

> I love that word "be reconciled,"
> Proving in thee the right Hellenic strain—

in which, as would seem, the forgiveness of injuries was a leading trait.

Depreciation of Hellenism has been associated, in such writers as Matthew Arnold and Ernest Renan, with an exaggerated and distorted estimate of Hebraism, of the values represented by Israel as a factor in universal history. My essay on "The Alleged Socialism of the Prophets" has for its object to point out the very serious misstatements of Renan on this subject. It is not offered as a revaluation of my own, but as a criticism on a revaluation which, in my opinion, is much more remote from truth than the generally accepted view. And I have tried to show in another essay, largely based on the researches of German scholarship, that Socialism is not a Hebrew but a Greek idea, subsequently imported from Greek philosophy into the teaching of the early Church—not, as Renan thinks, taken up by the Gospel from the prophetic tradition.

My essay on "Pascal's Wager" goes to prove that the great Jansenist's celebrated defence of Christianity is, as logic, utterly worthless; and that, as morality, it credits God with proceedings for which the most audacious Jesuitical casuistry would blush to apologise.

When the essay on Buckle first appeared, now

more than a quarter of a century ago, I was privately censured by an eminent living critic for wasting my time in exposing the fallacies of a philosopher whose memory only survived "in half-educated German circles." The revival of Buckle's fame and the diffusion of his wonderful work in cheap editions during the last ten years will, I hope, be found a sufficient apology for reprinting what, I believe, is still the only complete explanation of his system ever offered to the public. I may mention also that, as the literary executors of Lord Acton have recently thought fit to republish two most bitter and pedantic articles of his on Buckle, there ought to be room in contemporary literature for a somewhat more appreciative estimate of one who, if he did not equal the Roman Catholic historian in some branches of erudition, far surpassed him in speculative genius.

A generation has passed since the word "Agnosticism," originally created by Huxley, was first put into general currency by Leslie Stephen. But the full meaning of the term, instead of being elucidated by constant use, has become ever more obscured. I cannot hope to correct the evil; but I shall at least have the satisfaction of putting on record in a somewhat more permanent form my

protest against the misuse of what, whether it stands for truth or for error, serves at any rate to mark off in contradistinction from older forms of rationalism an interesting and, it may be, a permanent phase of speculation.

A. W. B.

July, 1909.

CORRECTIONS

P. 47: "Nicias consummated the ruin of the Sicilian expedition by postponing his retreat a whole month in consequence of an eclipse of the moon." In point of fact, Nicias was compelled to begin his retreat a few days after the eclipse; but his wish and intention was to put it off for a month, and the delay of a few days proved equally fatal.

P. 86: "Some such measure.....as the Licinian Rogations." It is now the opinion of the most authoritative Roman historians that the Licinian Rogations included no agrarian provisions.

P. 111, *note*: For "Emmanuel" read "Emanuel." The passage referred to occurs on p. 36 of Deutsch's *Literary Remains*.

REVALUATIONS

THE ETHICAL VALUE OF HELLENISM

If we are to judge by certain estimates current in the popular literature of the present day, the ethical value of Hellenism is either zero or a minus quantity. The ancient Greeks were Pagans in the sense that they were neither Jews nor Christians; and the word "Paganism" is commonly used to connote the complete absence of moral restraints, more especially of those which are imposed on the sexual relations. An epigrammatic novelist describes a group of young people, among whom marriage seems to have been replaced by connections of a more transitory character, as living in a world of Christian names and Pagan morals. Mr. Shorthouse, speaking through the mouthpiece of John Inglesant, refers to "the old world of pleasure and art—a world that took the pleasures of life boldly, and had no conscience to prevent its cultivating and enjoying them to the full." Apparently John Inglesant had not read the Epistle to the Romans. Another writer of fiction, Mr. Benjamin Kidd, seems to think that altruism was unknown before the Christian era. Mr. W. D. Howells implies in one of his novels that monogamy only dates from the same period.

And a far higher authority, Matthew Arnold, has made the antithesis between Hellenism and Hebraism common form in literature—Hellenism standing for science and art, Hebraism for conduct; that is to say, for three-fourths of life.

Before inquiring into the justice of this summary and wholesale condemnation, I would call attention to the singular circumstance that a directly opposite estimate of Pagan virtue prevailed all through the Middle Ages. It might have been supposed that during the centuries when Catholicism reigned without a rival over the Western conscience, and when the traditions of the *régime* which it had displaced were fresher than among ourselves, observers, especially ecclesiastical observers, would have been still more deeply impressed by the moral regeneration assumed to have been wrought by the Church. Such, however, is not the case. Among mediæval authorities there seems to be but one opinion as regards the moral superiority of classical antiquity over their own contemporaries. "The Gentiles," says Abélard, "who had no scriptural law and heard no sermons, put us to shame by the example of their virtue, by the excellence of their precepts, and by the consistency of their lives with their teachings. Their philosophers boldly rebuked wickedness and suffered for truth's sake. Nor was it their philosophers only who shone so brightly in comparison with us. There is abundant evidence going to prove that the same virtues were practised by the worldly and the unlearned, and by women as well as by men."[1] It may be urged, and,

[1] *Opera*, ed. Cousin, II., p. 409.

indeed, it has been urged, that Abélard was a freethinking rationalist who sought to undermine Christianity. A much-scandalised apologist refers us to John of Salisbury for a very different view of the matter.[1] We turn to the pages of that excellent prelate, and find, to our surprise, that he confirms rather than contradicts his master's statements. Examples of every virtue are to be found among the characters of antiquity. The perfect model of what a sovereign ought to be is furnished by no Christian prince, but by the heathen Trajan. The Socratic teaching is a well of morals undefiled. If people find the Christian religion too severe, let them go to the Greek philosophers for lessons in chastity. And, indeed, if John is to be believed, they were in sore need of such lessons, for nothing so bad has been written about imperial Rome as his descriptions of court society in the Europe of the twelfth century. Doubtless the anarchy that prevailed under Stephen is largely responsible for the corruption laid bare in the *Polycraticus*.[2] But no such extenuating circumstances can be pleaded for the ages of faith and chivalry when, a century later, we find Roger Bacon repeating in more definite and explicit terms Abélard's exaltation of Pagan over Christian morals. If, says the great Franciscan, we cannot emulate, or even understand, the wisdom of the ancient philosophers, it is because we do not possess their virtue. Wisdom is inconsistent with sin, and demands perfect virtue in its professors. And of all sins the most fatal to

[1] Reuter, *Religiöse Aufklärung*, I., p. 317.
[2] *Polycraticus*, Lib. III., cap. 13.

learning is unchastity, from which none but a very few, and those by special grace, are exempt in their youth. Nor is this a mere general statement. He proceeds to relate how a number of professors and students of theology had the year before been expelled from Paris for the practice of unnatural vices. Such was the state of morals shortly before the death of St. Louis, at the very climax and flowering-time of mediæval Catholicism.[1]

I am not aware that any such clear and emphatic testimony to the superiority of Pagan morals is given by Dante, but it is at least suggestive of the same leaning that he should ascribe what little good Florence possessed to the descent of some few of her citizens from the ancient Romans. And we know from a brilliant chapter in the *Convitto* how highly he rated the virtues of the Romans, referring them even to divine inspiration. Whether he had an equally high opinion of the Greeks cannot be positively affirmed, but there is a significant passage in the *Inferno* pointing in that direction. The motive to which Ulysses appeals when urging his companions to sail beyond the Pillars of Hercules is the remembrance that they were not born to live like brutes, but to pursue virtue and knowledge. And to this appeal the Greek sailors, according to Dante, readily respond.[2]

It may be objected that Dante was a poet and a scholar, more in sympathy with the old than with the new spirit; Roger Bacon a man of science sheltering himself under the Franciscan habit—

[1] *Compendium Theologiæ*, ed. Brewer, pp. 398 *seq.*

[2] *Inferno*, Canto xxvi., 118 *seq.*

both, perhaps, Christians only under compulsion. There is, however, one more authority, to which no such exception can be taken—the authority either of Aquinas or of one whose speculations were permitted to pass under his name. This writer, while confessing a preference for the republican form of government, admits that it is "only fitted for men living in the primitive state of sinlessness, or so wise and virtuous as the ancient Romans were"[1]—clearly not for a society so corrupt as the crusading chivalry of France.

To what cause shall we ascribe this extraordinary revolution in Christian opinion as to the moral value of classic civilisation? A sufficiently easy solution suggests itself at once. The mediæval scholars romanced about Pagan virtue because they did not know what Paganism was. The Greeks and Romans were to them what the Chinese were to the philosophers of the eighteenth century; and they used them just like those philosophers, as a stick to beat their contemporaries with. The far more complete knowledge of Pagan life and literature that we owe to the Renaissance and to modern research has led to very different conclusions, and it is on these that the estimates quoted at the beginning of this essay are based.

But the suggested explanation seems insufficient. If the schoolmen knew less than we know of Pagan literature, the fact remains that for all practical purposes they knew enough. If they had not read Aristophanes and Plato, they had read Aristotle's *Politics*, Terence, Horace, Ovid, Juvenal, Suetonius;

[1] Aquinas (?), *De Regimine Principum*, II., 9.

above all, they had read the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; nor does there seem the smallest reason to believe that a wider and deeper study of the Greek authors would have altered their estimate of the Greeks, except, perhaps, to raise it still higher, by making them more familiar with the whole range of Greek virtue. The truth is that their reading of classical antiquity was not biassed as ours is by an apologetic interest. They accepted Christianity because it was true, not because it strengthened the hands of the social reformer, the magistrate, and the policeman. Hence, there was no particular motive for exaggerating its services in that direction. Religion, no doubt, was useful, but its utility consisted not so much in making people better members of society as in saving them from eternal damnation. Baptism gave a chance, absolution *in articulo mortis* gave a certainty of escaping from that dreadful fate; and the possession of so precious a privilege was the great advantage that the Christian possessed over the Pagan. Otherwise, as we have seen, he had nothing to boast of—rather the contrary. Whatever vices the Church condemned had been condemned by Greek philosophy. Whatever vices had been practised among Pagans were repeated with aggravating circumstances in the most famous seats of Christian learning; and those whose experience had familiarised them with the cesspools of Paris and Bologna listened with more blunted sensibility to the unsavoury records of Thebes and Athens.

It might, indeed, be imagined that the appalling penalties inflicted on such offences in this world, and imagined for them in the next, bore witness to

an entirely new sense of their flagitiousness in the mediæval conscience. But no mistake would be greater than to use the criminal jurisprudence of the Middle Ages as a gauge of their moral susceptibility. Difficulty of detection for one thing, and the supposed slight cast on the honour of an earthly or heavenly sovereign for another, counted for incomparably more in the assessment of punishment than the actual wickedness of an offence as measured by the animosity that it excited in the public opinion of the times. Now, of that public opinion no austerer representative can be quoted than Dante; and what Dante really thought about the vice that is always brought up as the special opprobrium of Greece is sufficiently indicated by his extreme cordiality towards the lost soul of Brunetto Latini,[1] and by the fact that he subjects all sins of unchastity to an equal intensity of torment in the cleansing fires of purgatory.[2] Evidently the great Catholic poet was no more of a rigorist than the Platonic Socrates whose half-tolerant attitude so much shocked Professor Huxley.

We must, then, look elsewhere than to a mere increase of knowledge for an adequate explanation of that great revolution in the historical conscience which has led many of our contemporaries to reverse the mediæval view so completely that in the popular imagination Paganism, or, more precisely, the Græco-Roman spirit, has become identified with impurity, while Christianity has come to be regarded even more as the chief instrument of

[1] *Inferno*, Canto xv., 30 *sqq.* [2] *Purgatorio*, Canto xxvii.

moral reform than as the God-given means of salvation.

So far as I know, the change began with Luther. If in one way the Reformation was the last fruit of the Renaissance, in another way it was a reaction against the Renaissance. In returning to the standpoint of primitive Christianity Luther and his successors could not fail to become imbued with the hostility felt by the first Christians, and above all by St. Paul, towards the Pagan world; and all the more so as the worst vices of Paganism were being resuscitated under their eyes in papal Rome. Moreover, the dogmas that Luther attacked had been bound up in a peculiar way with the philosophy of Aristotle, and, therefore, the Aristotelian ethics became a special object of his animosity. The doctrine of moral habits seemed radically inconsistent with the doctrine of instantaneous regeneration. Men do not become just by performing just actions; they perform just actions because they have been made just. Speaking generally, Rome had apostasised from the purity of the gospel by incorporating with it much that was Pagan in doctrine and ritual; therefore with Paganism in all its forms war must be waged.

Rome naturally enough refused to accept this account of her parentage; but it made her all the more anxious to disclaim so compromising a connection. Hence both great divisions of western Christendom have united in vilifying the civilisation to which mediæval scholars looked back with fond regret as an unattainable standard of excellence. And before long their joint hostility was still

further aggravated by a new provocation. Undeterred by the double tide of reaction, the Renaissance continued to pursue its victorious career. Taking up human progress at the point where it had been let fall by Greek culture, the modern mind set itself to replace feudal Catholicism by a new art and a new science, a new morality and a new State. Concurrently with this great enterprise it carried on an unceasing criticism on the existing *régime*, its institutions and its beliefs. Both processes, the constructive and destructive, were powerfully aided by principles and examples derived from classical antiquity. All these efforts culminated in the French Revolution, whose leaders avowedly looked for their models to Greece and Rome. And as the Hellenic spirit had shared in their momentary triumph, so also it shared in the ruin and disgrace that speedily overtook their cause. For the first time since they came into existence the products of the Greek genius were systematically neglected and defamed by educated men ; recourse being had to mediæval art, literature, and politics for new ideals to put in their place. The Romanticists consciously ranged themselves behind the forces of reaction in Church and State ; and it was not without reason that Byron, the glorious standard-bearer of European progress, directed against them his fiercest attacks. So, too, the cause of Greek independence for which Byron gave his life became the battle-cry of resurgent Liberalism, and perhaps helped to win back Canning, the future Liberal leader, to the Liberal principles that had been his first love. Conversely, the Holy Alliance thwarted Greek aspirations to the utmost of its ability ; and

its literary agents carried the war into historical literature. Writing in 1834, J. S. Mill observes that "the most elaborate Grecian history which we possess [Mitford's] is impregnated with the anti-Jacobin spirit in every line; and the *Quarterly Review* laboured as diligently for many years to vilify the Athenian republic as the American."[1] Even greater bitterness was displayed by reactionary theologians. The Abbé Gaume in France and Dr. W. G. Ward in England joined in making the grotesque proposal that the Greek and Latin classics should no longer be taught in school, their place being supplied by patristic literature.[2]

The leaders of the reactionary movement against the French Revolution and the philosophy of the eighteenth century were, in truth, anything but Conservatives. They caught the spirit of innovation from their opponents, and even sympathised to a certain extent with their aims. Agreeing with them that the world needed to be reformed, and agreeing also that its reformation should be effected by social reconstruction, by education, by popular literature, by journalism—in short, by all the machinery that the schools of enlightenment had set in motion, they differed from them chiefly in holding that all these instruments should be animated by religious ideas, used for religious purposes, and wielded by the ministers of religion or by laymen to whom their confidence had been given. This is not the place to expatiate on that vast movement, nor, indeed, has the time come for

[1] *Dissertations and Discussions*, vol. i., p. 113.

[2] *W. G. Ward and the Catholic Revival*, pp. 114, 118, 194, and 454.

its history to be written. The important thing for us to observe is that it led to a new interpretation of Christianity, of the Church, and of the Bible. In rivalry with the ideals bequeathed or inspired by Hellenism, these also were represented as embodying a scheme of social reform, an ideal polity, a new reading of life. Thus it came about that Pagan and Christian morals, ancient and mediæval civilisation, were ranged in an unreal opposition and unhistorically contrasted as darkness and light. And so strong was the prejudice generated by the unscrupulous assertions of the reactionary party, so skilful were the rearrangements by which facts were disguised or set in a false light, that a generation taught to discard supernaturalist metaphysics has continued to accept a supernaturalist version of history, according to which the highest elements of human nature, intelligence and conscience, may exist and be developed in complete isolation from one another.

So much has seemed necessary by way of preamble in order to clear the ground for a candid consideration of the thesis I am prepared to support, which is no less than this—that the ethical value of Hellenism fully equals its intellectual and artistic value; that the Greeks were as great in what belongs to the conduct of life as they confessedly were in the creation of beauty or in the search for truth. They were, what Huxley called them, the real Chosen People, and that in a more absolute sense than he would have dared to maintain.

To avoid all possible misconstructions, I wish to state at the outset that I accept the current English

and American estimate of morality. I have no desire to be classed with the neo-Pagans—if the persons calling themselves by that name still exist as a class; I detest their theories, and I believe that in most ancient Greek communities they would have been summarily lynched had they tried to put those theories into practice.

It must be further understood that when I speak of Hellenism and of the Greeks I speak of what was highest and best in the race and in its bequest to posterity. This amounts to no more than is assumed in estimating the claims on our gratitude of any other extinct race or civilisation, or of any religion whether extinct or not. We really know little more than this, nor does it concern us to know more. The good lives on, the evil dies. The point needs emphasising because it has been particularly neglected in discussing the subject on which we are engaged. Instead of comparing Greek practice with the practice of other communities, Greek ideals with other ideals, we ignore the ideals and compare the practice with our own highest theoretical standards. I do not propose that the question of practice should be left out of account; on the contrary, I wish that it should figure largely in the estimate. An ideal to deserve the name must sooner or later, and sooner rather than later, influence conduct; failing that, it becomes worse than nothing, mere lying cant and hypocrisy. At the same time, in default of other evidence, it ought to count for something that a particular ideal should have been entertained in a particular society; it must, we may argue, have been suggested to our authority—poet, orator, or

the like—by some happy experience of his own or by the tradition of a better age. And this is more especially true when we are dealing with a frank and sincere people, as the Greek, or at least the Ionian race, will presently appear to have been.

Another point also should be borne in mind. In placing the ethical value of Hellenism on a level with its intellectual and æsthetic value I am claiming for it no chimerical perfection. The art of Hellas was not perfect, nor was its philosophy; still less its science. In all three the Greeks have been surpassed by the successors who, profiting by their lessons and their example, have taken up their tradition and carried it to a higher pitch of excellence. And what is more to the point, other races, working simultaneously with them, or at a later period in complete independence of their influence, have in some ways shown a more delicate æsthetic perception, a truer sense of objective reality, a more penetrating reach of reflection, a more successful ingenuity in devising methods of calculation. So also with morals. The virtue of chastity may have been better taught and more generally practised among the Jews, self-devotion among the Romans, personal loyalty among the Germans, sympathy with all living things on the banks of the Ganges. But just as no alien philosophy and no alien art, taken altogether, could compete with the philosophy and the art of Hellas, so neither was the moral life of any other people so rich, so well balanced, so identified with its inmost nature, yet so capable of a world-wide diffusion or of expansion

and adaptation to altered circumstances in after ages.

That the Greeks were so great in art and science furnishes a certain presumption that they attained, to say the least of it, some eminence in morality. To part off the æsthetic life and the intellectual life from the life of conduct, as Matthew Arnold does, is a mere conventional abstraction. It would be little to say that there is no hard-and-fast line of demarcation; there is, in fact, no line at all. Conduct is co-extensive with activity, and falls under different laws of obligation as its subject-matter varies; but it never escapes from obligation altogether. As regards fine art, this truth is now widely recognised, and finds expression in such common terms as "good work," "conscience," and "sincerity" in connection with the production and the criticism of æsthetic objects. And as regards scientific investigation it is almost too obvious to need emphasising. Of course the artist and, although more rarely, the philosopher may be faithful to the duties of his special calling and faithless to the ordinary duties of a citizen, like Benvenuto Cellini or Francis Bacon. But the same possibility of a high moral development in one direction, combined with grave deficiencies in another, runs through the whole circle of human activity. There seems to be no solidarity among the virtues. Sovereigns exemplary in their domestic relations, and ready to undergo martyrdom for their religion, have been false to their word like Charles I., or false to their country like Louis XVI. And conversely the highest public loyalty may co-exist with gross private vices as in the case of William

III. A keen sense of beauty may have its temptations in the direction of sexual immorality; and the impersonation of Aprodite Anadyomene by Phryne, so picturesquely described by Matthew Arnold, may indicate a weak point of this kind in Hellenism. But Puritanism, too, has its temptations in the direction, among others, of savage cruelty towards women, abundantly illustrated in the history of our own civil wars.

Intellectualism, likewise, may have its moral dangers, among which want of common honesty will probably occur to most readers as the chief. But as this deficiency seems also to accompany every degree of stupidity and ignorance, the connection after all is very possibly accidental. However this may be, love of knowledge, as represented by the Greeks, has one great and characteristic virtue—the love of truth. The claim will excite some surprise. From Cyrus to Hobart Pasha the enemies of that people have habitually spoken of them as liars. I cannot say that my own small experience of the modern Greeks has given me that impression. On the contrary, they struck me rather as a frank and straightforward race, very inaccurate certainly, but without any intention to deceive. Our business, however, is not now with the average Greek, ancient or modern, but with the *élite* of the Pagan period; and of these it may be said, I think, that they have set an example of truthfulness unequalled except by those moderns who have been trained in their school. "Hateful to me as the gates of Hades is he who hides one thing in his breast and tells another," says the Homeric Achilles; and Plato, with a still more exacting standard of veracity,

censures Achilles for uttering threats that he does not mean to execute.[1] Sophocles, in what is, ethically at least, the noblest of all his tragedies, makes Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles and the guardian of his tradition, quite incapable of carrying out the scheme of deceit into which he has been reluctantly drawn. "Tell no lies" was a maxim of Solon. Thucydides, himself a historian of admirable sincerity, seems to cast a slight shade of censure on the heroic Brasidas for making a statement that was untrue, although useful from the diplomatic point of view.[2] Epaminondas was famous for his strict adherence to truth; and Marcus Aurelius, known as Verissimus, ascribes his hatred of falsehood to the teaching of a Stoic tutor.[3]

A Roman satirist has charged the Greek historians with mendacity on a point where their accuracy has been signally confirmed by modern research.[4] He might with more justice have extended the accusation to his own countrymen. Early Roman history has been in many instances deliberately falsified by national or family vanity; nor are the later portions altogether trustworthy. We are told of Dr. Arnold that "the falsity and corruption of the Latin historians was for ever suggesting to him the contrast of their Grecian rivals." And if Arnold had directed his studies more systematically to what is called "Sacred History," the same contrast might have suggested itself in a more unpleasant form. If we are to credit the Higher Criticism—which is the only

[1] *Hippias Minor*, 370 A.
[2] iv., 108.
[3] *Meditations*, i., 15.
[4] Juvenal, x., 174.

honest criticism—whole masses of ancient Hebrew literature are deliberate forgeries, in the sense in which we speak of the forged Decretals of Isidore; and the incidents related in them are to a great extent fictitious. Theologians tell us that the fabrication of documents purporting to contain a divine revelation did not at that period and among Orientals imply the same guilt that a like proceeding argued in the Middle Ages and would argue now. If so, it seems rather audacious to refer us to such a quarter for elementary moral instruction. However that may be, we have to congratulate ourselves on the fact that in Attica, at any rate, public opinion had early risen to a stage at which truth and falsehood were more accurately discriminated. Herodotus has preserved an anecdote that well illustrates the contrast offered by Hellenism and Hebraism in this respect. During the sixth century B.C. a great religious revival, now known as Orphicism, sprang up in the Greek world and had Attica for its principal seat. One of the leaders of the movement, a certain Onomacritus, stood high in the favour of the Peisistratid Hipparchus, and seems to have been employed by him in editing the prophecies of Musaeus, a somewhat mythical authority of the school. Having, however, been detected in the act of interpolating a prediction of his own in the collection, the unlucky forger was summarily expelled from the country by his indignant patron, one of whose maxims, engraved where every passer-by could read it, was, "Do not deceive thy friend."[1]

[1] Herodotus, vii., 6.

Hipparchus was not, in other respects, a model of virtue, but it is fortunate that in this matter of pious forgeries we have been brought up on his principles rather than on Hilkiah's. But our excellent training has its occasional inconveniences. It makes some honourable persons too reluctant to admit that forgery and fabrication on a great scale were actually practised by holy men among the Jews. Moving in a world of Hellenic sincerity, and not without the simplicity that a wise Hellene has called the principal element in a noble nature, they have failed to realise the possibilities of Hebraic duplicity. A typical example of this uncompromising attitude is furnished by the manner in which that great and high-minded theologian, F. D. Maurice, was impressed by the speculations of Colenso. "I asked him," writes Maurice, "if he did not think Samuel must have been a horrid scoundrel if he forged a story about the I AM, speaking of Moses, and, to my unspeakable surprise and terror, he said 'No. Many good men have done such things. He might not mean more than Milton meant.'"[1] Most educated theologians have come to agree with Colenso, except that they would place the composition of the Elohistic narrative considerably later than the time of Samuel. But their whole tone as regards the limits of truthfulness in religious teaching is such as to inspire plain men with something of the "surprise and terror" felt by Maurice.

It may be objected that Plato, a typical Greek and the greatest of Greek moralists, took similar

[1] *Life of F. D. Maurice*, II., p. 423.

liberties with the truth, to the extent even of leaving it doubtful whether he really believed in any God or in any future life. The fact is so; and his warmest admirers must always regret that it should be so. Such prevarications show the mischief that comes of trying to combine mythology with philosophy. But, at any rate, Plato knew what he was doing. Unlike our modern theologians, he avoided what he called the "lie in the soul," not deceiving himself, however much he may have wished to deceive the people. Even here we can see how admirably well Ruskin has said of the Greeks, "they have not lifted up their souls unto vanity."

From the consideration of veracity as practised in Greece we pass to that part of conduct which is more directly concerned with the mutual relations of human beings, to the great interests of justice and beneficence.

It is a familiar fact that the people of whom we are speaking divided all mankind into Greeks and barbarians. By the latter they originally meant only those whose language they could not understand. But in time barbarian came to mean much more than this. With the Greeks, as with ourselves, it stood for the opposite of civilised. But the civilisation with which they identified Hellenism was no mere material good. The barbarians might have better roads, more accumulated capital, a more highly developed industrial system, larger and even better disciplined armies than theirs. In the eyes of a Greek these things were desirable, but they were not the one thing needful. That one thing without which there could be no real civilisation was the reign of law in opposition to the rule of a

despot on the one hand, and on the other to that anarchical state of society where wrongs are redressed, or rather perpetuated, by private vengeance. It is a blessing, says the Jason of Euripides, to live in a country that is governed not by brute force, but by law.[1] And the same poet makes Tyndareus tell his son-in-law Menelaus, who has been excusing the matricide of Orestes, that he has become barbarised by living out of Greece so long. Otherwise he would see that the right course for Orestes was to bring his mother before a court of justice on the charge of murdering her husband. For when one homicide is requited by another the blood-feud goes on for ever, to the total destruction of orderly and peaceful relations.[2] Let those who expatiate on the moral superiority of Hebraism to Hellenism remember that this barbarous principle of blood-vengeance is sanctioned by the Priestly Code promulgated by Ezra in the middle of the fifth century B.C., and that it was in full force at the very time when the noble verses of Euripides were being recited before the assembled people of Athens.

And this suggests another contrast. Thanks to the eloquence of Renan and the still more fervid declamations of James Darmesteter, himself a Jew, much attention was drawn ten years ago[3] to the passionate preaching of justice by the Hebrew prophets. It was well that this should be done, and done so well. It was well that devout readers of Scripture should be made to realise the fact that the prophets of Israel had something else to do than to mystify their hearers by discussing the

[1] *Medea*, 536–38. [2] *Orestes*, 485 *sqq.* [3] Written in 1901.

affairs of modern Europe between two and three thousand years in advance. And it was well also to remind pious company-promoters and guinea-pigs that subscriptions to missionary societies would not have purchased absolution for wholesale robbery from Amos and Isaiah. All honour to the preachers who, whether at Samaria and Jerusalem or in London and Paris, identify religion with justice and mercy rather than with dogma and ritual! But let not our recognition of their services blind us to the still greater services of those who, unaided by supernatural promises or terrors, actually accomplished that for which the prophets vainly strove—the legislators, magistrates, and orators who established and carried on the righteous governments of Greece under which the poor working man could not be plundered with impunity as he was plundered in the Holy Land.

Certain historical errors die hard, and one has just occurred to me against which it would be well to enter a caution. I can imagine some readers exclaiming, "There were no paid working men in Greece; the free Greek citizens were an oligarchy living in idleness on the produce of slave labour." Such, indeed, seems to have been at one time the prevalent belief, and it may still survive in certain circles. To assert that the Greek democracies were not democracies at all in our sense of the word, but aristocracies of a particularly oppressive kind, was part of the reactionary and anti-Hellenic propaganda carried on after the French Revolution, to which reference has been already made. The assertion is, however, untrue, and anyone may easily

convince himself by consulting the Greek literature of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. that the bulk of the Athenian voters consisted of petty shopkeepers, peasants, and day labourers. Slaves no doubt there were, and a good many of them, although their number has been enormously exaggerated, as Professor Beloch shows in his brilliant work on the population of the ancient world.[1] But slavery existed everywhere in antiquity, in Judæa as well as in Greece. White slavery, indeed, lasted far down into the Middle Ages, with the partial approval of the Church, and was finally extinguished by purely economical causes; while black slavery, after being actively promoted by professing Christians, and attaining portentous dimensions without a protest from the Christian conscience, owed its final destruction to a movement set on foot by freethinking philosophers and then taken up by that most rationalistic of Christian sects, the Society of Friends. But the original impulse to abolitionism came, as will presently be shown, from Greek thought.

Returning to the contrast between the Greeks and other nations, it has to be observed that the barbarians, too, had their laws—a fact of which we cannot suppose Euripides to have been ignorant, as it was already familiar to Herodotus. The really important distinction was that, while the Greek laws gave a far more effectual protection against the arbitrary will of the rulers and against the passions of private individuals, they did not become, as with

[1] J. Beloch, *Die Bevölkerung der griechisch-römischen Welt,* pp. 84 *sqq.*

the Asiatics, an instrument of irremediable bondage. Where men's habits of thinking took their whole shape and colour from the traditions of despotism the law itself could not be conceived but as a despot armed with divine authority and raised above criticism or emendation. There may have been something of the same feeling in Greece also. But at a comparatively early period it was met and overcome by the idea of law as an expression of the collective will, and therefore as something that might be altered with the altered needs of the community, or with the increase of general enlightenment. Her teachers expressed this principle in various ways, one by declaring that man was the measure of all things, another by contending that the measure was rather supplied by nature, by the rules of conduct that experience showed to be observed at all times and in all places.

Either of these methods would serve to accomplish the step that first makes morality what it is, the transition from the letter to the spirit of legal obligation. We owe to Rome the word equity by which that essential element of law is ordinarily expressed; but the notion is purely Greek. It is that ἐπιείκεια—rather oddly translated "sweet reasonableness" by Matthew Arnold—which Aristotle has defined in a manner that leaves nothing to be desired. He tells us that the equitable man fulfils the intention of the legislator in cases for which the legislator, being tied to general terms, could not provide. In cases of disputed right he will not grasp all that the letter of the law gives him, but will take somewhat less

than his strict right. And as the laws must be interpreted in the light of their original intention, so also the merit of the obedience paid to them, or the demerit of disobedience, must be measured by the agent's intention. Involuntary transgressions, according to Aristotle, are not deserving of punishment, but of pardon, and sometimes of pity. That anyone can justly be made to suffer punishment for a wrong committed through no fault of his would, from this point of view, have been absolutely unintelligible. So also would be the theory that crimes can be expiated by the sufferings of the innocent. And at the present day such beliefs are explicable only as survivals or recrudescences of Hebraic barbarism, quite impossible in a completely Hellenised society.

A spiritualised morality relieves the individual from all responsibility for actions not committed intentionally by him or through any negligence on his part. But within the sphere of individual life it extends responsibility from overt acts to thoughts and desires. A Spartan who consulted the Delphic oracle on the desirability of appropriating a deposit that he had sworn to return received for answer that his very question amounted to a crime, and would be punished as such.[1] When the poet Sophocles dwelt somewhat too rapturously on the charms of a beautiful stranger, Pericles reminded him that the eyes of a general should be as pure as his hands.[2] And, in what is believed to be a portrait of Aristeides, Aeschylus describes him as wishing not to seem but to be the best.[3]

[1] Herodotus, vi., p. 86. [2] Plutarch, *Pericles*, chap. viii.
[3] *Seven against Thebes*, 588.

An intention or wish may be made the subject of human, or at least of divine, penalties, as we saw in the case of the fraudulent Spartan, and may be repressed solely through the fear of such. Therefore, to complete the spiritualisation of morality it must become wholly disinterested, or dependent on none but internal sanctions. Greek philosophy rose to this height. It pronounced the distinguishing mark of a sage to be that he would act as before if the laws ceased to exist. And Plato pushed the principle to an extreme when he maintained that, even if the just man should live in obloquy and die in torment, he would have chosen wisely in preferring righteousness to prosperous iniquity.[1]

The sanction of disinterested virtue lies in the pain given by a wounded conscience to those who violate its dictates. Both the notion and the name of conscience are Greek creations, and first received wide currency from the Stoic philosophy, whence they passed to St. Paul and became so thoroughly incorporated with Christian theology that, in the opinion of many, the existence of such an inward monitor was unknown to Paganism. But we find it distinctly recognised by Isocrates[2] a century before Zeno taught at Athens; nor can we suppose that a popular rhetorician was the first to formulate so profound a thought. Indeed, the thing itself goes back to Homer, in the character of whose Helen it is a distinguishing trait. Alike in the supreme triumph of her beauty on the walls of Troy and in the dignity of her rehabilitated matronhood at

[1] *Republic*, p. 361. [2] *Demonicus*, i., p. 16.

Sparta, the sense of forfeited female honour is ever present to her thoughts, and that without the least admixture of supernatural terror—for the goddess Aphrodite is offended by her scruples—or of shrinking from public opinion, for no voice is raised against her but her own.

"In justice," says Phocylides, "is summed up the whole of virtue." "Justice," says an unknown Greek author, "is more beautiful than the morning or evening star." But what, after all, did they mean by it? Aristotle, who quotes these lyrical expressions, gives no very helpful definition; nor does Plato, although his *Republic* was written to develop the idea of justice. Here, again, we may profitably consult Isocrates. That excellent teacher tells us not to do to others what would make us angry if it were done to us[1]—the first and far the more important part of the golden rule. The principle is not enunciated as if it were particularly new; but Isocrates applies it elsewhere in a way that was new to his contemporaries, that had not occurred to anyone outside Greece, and that even now is not universally recognised. He tells husbands that they have no right to exact from their wives what they do not give, and that the fidelity which they demand is equally obligatory on themselves.[2] Monogamy had been a law with the Greeks so far back as we can trace their history, and they regarded polygamy with abhorrence as a custom of the Barbarians[3]—a fact which those should remember who set the Hebrews, a

[1] *Nicocles*, p. 61. [2] *Ibid*, p. 40.

[3] Euripides, *Andromache*, 177, 243, 464.

polygamous people, on a higher moral plane. And we see by this passage in Isocrates that some, at least, among the Greeks were prepared to draw the logical consequences of monogamy. Nor was the principle here enunciated ever quite forgotten. Plato also in his last period enjoins the same constancy on husbands, though rather on grounds of social utility than of justice;[1] and although the first Stoics, like some moderns, advocated free love for both sexes alike, Epictetus, writing four centuries later, returns to the same standard of conjugal fidelity, with the recommendation, which is also Platonic, of antenuptial chastity for men as well as for women.[2]

According to the Greeks, the obligations of equality and reciprocity rested on natural law. The invariable return of physical phenomena at equal intervals of time, the co-existence and mutual limitation of the everlasting elements that make up the universe, were so many object-lessons in justice, so many silent protests against the abuse of superior strength or the violation of sworn pledges among men. And unmeasured indulgence in sensual gratifications was similarly interpreted as a derogation from the rationality by which nature had expressly distinguished men from brutes. Thus the maxim, Follow nature, came to be accepted as the great constitutive principle of morals. And it was not merely used as a general sanction for the accepted code of conduct, but still more as a potent engine of reform, as a protest against inveterate abuses, or as an index to new

[1] *Laws*, pp. 839-40.

[2] *Encheiridion*, xxxiii., p. 8.

ideals of perfection. We have not now to discuss the logical value of the physiocratic method. It may be used at all times, and it was more than once used at Athens, as an apology for anti-social egoism on the part of individuals or of States. Civilisation itself has been condemned as a departure from nature; and, conversely, nature might be denounced as the great enemy of civilisation, with the further deduction that no artificial refinement on our original pleasures should be tabooed merely on the ground that it is unnatural. But good causes are often supported by bad reasons; and, whether logical or not, the Greek appeal to nature seems on the whole to have made for righteousness. Certain detestable vices were once for all stigmatised as unnatural, and a constant warfare kept up against them by the philosophers from Prodicus to Plotinus, until the attack was taken over by Christianity to be prosecuted with more drastic methods, although, if we are to believe Roger Bacon and Dante, for a long time with no greater success.

Another application of the same principle led to the denunciation of slavery as contrary to nature. The cry was apparently first raised to justify the revolt of Messenian Helots against their Spartan masters, but it soon received a far wider application. Certain philosophers struck at the root of what was not then a "peculiar institution" by declaring that all men were born free. This assumption has been mercilessly criticised by Bentham, and more recently on the same lines by Huxley. As a question of logic, their triumph is complete; but the crudeness of the naturalistic formula should not blind us to the truth that it

contains. To enslave a human being is to treat him like a brute, or, in the still more degrading phrase of Aristotle, like a living tool; and no reasonable being will, in the long run, submit to such treatment, or regard it as anything but an outrage. Reasonings of a more elaborate and far-reaching character show that the exploitation of one class by another leads to the ruin of the whole community; but nothing so surely rouses the oppressed to revolt, or the brave and disinterested to the championship of their cause, as an appeal to this wounded sentiment; and it is part of our ethical debt to the Greeks that the appeal was first made by them.

To assert one's own rights, and to respect the rights of others, is much, but it is not all; and, human nature being what it is, a well-organised community cannot rest on the single virtue of justice. After law, and the spirit of law which is equity, we must bring in the third and completing element of morality, which is love. I am not sure what is the current estimate of the Greeks in this respect. Perhaps the same popular writers and preachers who deny them morality and conscience think of them also—*ad majorem Dei gloriam*—as a heartless and selfish people, wrapped up in a sense of their own superiority to the rest of the world. Mr. Stillman, who stood up for the modern Greeks, called their Pagan ancestors (or predecessors) a cruel and bloodthirsty *canaille*. Burckhardt, with more scholarship than Stillman, seems to have arrived at pretty much the same conclusion. In fact, they suffer from being so very modern. We judge them not by comparison with the Jews or the

Romans, or even with mediæval Christendom, but by our own ethical standards.

Here again the antithesis between Hellenes and barbarians may prove helpful. In English and other modern languages "barbarous," as we know, has the secondary meaning of inhuman and cruel. But this association has come down to us from the Latin, and was adopted by the Latins from the Greeks. In Greek literature the instances where "barbarous" is used in the sense of cruel are certainly late and few, but they are sufficient to show that cruelty was regarded as essentially alien to the Greek character. Nor was the belief unfounded. History and literature testify to its validity, to the relative humanity of the Greeks, and more especially of those among them in whom the Hellenic type most perfectly realised itself. Homer's Achilles was a merciful victor until the death of Patroclus almost extinguished pity in his breast, and even then it could be reawakened by the tears of Priam. Euripides tells us that to slay prisoners of war was against the laws of Athens.[1] The Spartan Gylippus pleaded, though in vain, for the lives of the captive Athenian generals at Syracuse; and another great Spartan, Callicratidas, declared that no Greek should be sold into slavery with his consent.[2] With the spread of philosophy this feeling received a wider extension. Agesilaus impressed on his troops the duty of treating their Persian prisoners with humanity.[3] Epameinondas

[1] *Heracleidae*, 961-66.
[2] Grote, *History of Greece*, vi., pp. 179 and 387.
[3] *Op. cit.*, vii., p. 429.

refused to participate in a political assassination.[1] Dion, the pupil of Plato, declared that he had learned in the Academy not merely to be loyal to his friends, but to forgive injuries and to be gentle to transgressors;[2] and we know from Plato's *Laws* that this was really what the master taught. Philip and Alexander too, though ruling over a semi-barbarous people, and not without a deep taint of barbarism in their personal habits, showed in their hour of triumph a clemency hitherto unknown to the possessors of irresponsible power.

These, it may be admitted, are no more than individual instances of a merciful disposition. But language may fairly be quoted in evidence of its wide diffusion. The very word humanity is of Greek origin, being a translation (through the Latin) of φιλανθρωπία, which conveys the same meaning with a somewhat warmer tone. And there is the more direct evidence of Plato, who tells us that one expects the inhabitants of a Greek city to be good and gentle. Gentleness and humanity, says Isocrates, are of all qualities the most highly esteemed among men; and the Athenians, at least, liked to be complimented on their possession. But the best proof of their prevalence is afforded by a passage where it is quite incidentally and unintentionally disclosed. In what is meant to be a very satirical picture of democratic society, obviously drawn from his own native city, Plato mentions that the last extreme of popular liberty is where "the slave is just as free as his purchaser." Even allowing for exaggeration, where so much as

[1] *Op. cit.*, viii., p. 78. [2] Plutarch, *Dion*, p. 979, A.

this could be said slaves must have been very kindly treated. And it is a fresh tribute to Athenian humanity when Plato adds that "horses and asses have a way of marching along [in the streets of a democratic city] with all the rights and dignities of freemen." He also mentions, what to many will sound the most surprising thing of all, that under an extreme democracy—*i.e.*, at Athens, there was complete equality between the sexes.[1]

To appreciate fully the humanity of the Greeks we must compare them with the other leading nations of antiquity. Little need be said of the great Oriental monarchies. Of these Egypt seems to have been the least barbarous; yet Egyptian sculptors loved to represent their most famous kings in the act of butchering a crowd of defenceless captives, and their labourers as fainting under the taskmaster's stick. The Phœnicians, with their crucifixions and human holocausts, may also be summarily dismissed. If the early annals of the Israelites as recorded in the Hexateuch were authentic, we could no more ascribe any feeling of humanity to such a sanguinary and fanatical horde than to the Huns or to Abdul Hamid. Happily, and to the no small satisfaction of enlightened modern Jews, the wholesale atrocities recounted with so much complacency by the priestly historian are demonstrably fictitious. But the fiction has a historical value. It shows what were the ideals of the Jewish nation in the fifth century B.C., and presumably of their descendants for many centuries afterwards; and the impression

[1] *Republic*, viii., p. 563 (Jowett's translation).

thus created is deepened by the testimony of the equally fabulous book of Esther.

The only people of antiquity who can dispute the moral supremacy of Greece are the Romans. They had, no doubt, their good qualities; but of these humanity was not one. In reference to the political struggles of the early Roman republic, Macaulay has indeed credited them with a tenderness for the lives of their fellow-citizens unknown to Greek factions.[1] But Dr. Arnold has conclusively vindicated the Greeks from this aspersion. He points out that the bloodless struggles between the Patricians and the Plebeians are more properly paralleled by the equally bloodless contest of the "party of the coast" at Athens with the Eupatridæ; while the more sanguinary faction-fights of later Greek history answer to the proscriptions of Marius and Sulla, or of the Triumvirs.[2]

Apart from such episodical outbreaks of passion, we have indubitable proofs of the inhumanity of the Romans in the barbarous character of their punishments—especially their custom of flogging before executing, even in the case of prisoners of war—and still more of their amusements. It must indeed be admitted that through the contagion of Roman example the gladiatorial games spread at last over the whole Hellenic world. But Greek philosophy kept up a steady protest against this barbarity; and, when it was proposed to introduce the games into Athens, Demonicus the Cynic called on the people to begin by pulling down the

[1] In the Preface to his *Virginia*.

[2] Arnold's *Thucydides*, i., p. 519.

altar of pity. According to the modern writer who has studied the civilisation of the Empire most profoundly, this amusement was never popular with any but the dregs of the people in Greece;[1] and it was finally abolished in the West through the heroic self-sacrifice of a Greek. Everyone has heard how the monk Telemachus made his way from the heart of the Eastern Empire to protest against the cruel exhibitions still kept up at Rome; how he descended into the arena of the Coliseum, threw himself between the combatants, perished by their swords, and produced such an effect by his death that public opinion insisted on the abolition of the gladiatorial games. But how few think of this pathetic story except as redounding to the glory of Christianity! Assuredly the death of Telemachus does honour to his religion. But it also does honour to his race and to that philosophical training which had been preparing it through long ages to accept with enthusiasm the new faith that was to give Greek philanthropy a mystical consecration and a world-wide diffusion.

Before the advent of Christianity the diffusion, if not the consecration, had already begun. Renan, if I remember rightly, has said that the Greeks despised the Barbarians too much to embrace them in a single fraternity. But here, as elsewhere, the great French critic betrays the ineradicable prejudices of a seminarist. No ancient race was so generous to its neighbours or so beloved by them as the Greeks. Already in Homer the note of generous sympathy with a foeman is struck, and it

[1] Friedlander, *Sittengeschichte Roms,* ii., p. 384, 5th ed.

never ceases to vibrate through the hearts of his successors. Cyrus and Anacharsis were Greek ideals; even Xerxes obtained a meed of admiration; and Rome owes much of her glory to the rapturous eulogies of Greek historians. It was seen that the superiority claimed — and justly claimed—over the Barbarians did not belong to the Hellenic race as such, for in earlier ages there had been no marked difference, and the primitive barbarism still survived in some Hellenic tribes, but was, as we should say, an evolution due to favourable circumstances. Hellenism, in fact, meant culture, and culture could be communicated to all who desired it. In the language of Hippias, the distinctions of birth are conventional; by nature all like-minded persons are kinsmen, friends, and fellow-citizens.[1] In the language of Isocrates, the partakers of Athenian culture should sooner be called Hellenes than those who were merely of the same race.[2] And in the same spirit a doctrine of human collectivism was subsequently preached by the Cynic and, with more elaboration, by the Stoic school. Finally, Eratosthenes, followed by Plutarch, proposed to abolish the distinction between Greeks and Barbarians, and to replace it by a classification based entirely on the contrast between virtue and vice.[3]

Had more of the earlier Stoic literature been preserved, we should, doubtless, have more such generous sayings on record. As it is, the philosophic writers of the Empire—some of them

[1] Plato, *Protagoras*, p. 337. [2] *Panegyricus*, p. 51.
[3] Quoted by Strabo, I., 9.

Romans—must remain our principal authorities for the idea of a common humanity with its implicit obligations of mutual service and love. But even if Seneca and Marcus Aurelius did not directly copy from the older masters, the spirit of their teaching remains purely Hellenic, and is derived by an unbroken tradition from the schools of Athens.

Moral reform is the verification of ethics. If the lectures delivered at Athens exercised no regenerating influence on their hearers, then they were what the enemies of philosophy called them, mere chatter, sophistry, waste of time, at best an abstract expression for what had been felt and done in the uncorrupted prime of Hellas. And this is what we are still—or were until lately—taught to regard as the net result of speculative Paganism by theologians who fail to see that as good a case might be made out against Christianity if its enemies employed the same logic. But the facts are beginning to be more impartially studied and better understood. A brilliant historian, to whom I have already referred, Professor Beloch, points out how much more humanely war was conducted by Greek generals in the fourth century B.C. than in the fifth, and what better ideas as to the position of women were beginning to make their way in the society of the same period. And he has no hesitation in ascribing this improved tone to the new standards introduced by philosophy. Nor can it be truly said that this advance was paid for by a proportionate decline in the manlier virtues. Courage and patriotism continued to be displayed when circumstances called them forth. The defence of Athens

against Demetrius, against Antigonus, and, much later, against Sulla, was not inferior to the deeds of the Persian and Peloponesian wars; and numerous examples of a like heroism are to be found in the later history of other Greek states.[1]

Still more striking is the evidence offered by the history of the third century A.D. Alone among the inhabitants of the Empire the Greeks of that period spontaneously took up arms against the Gothic invaders and largely contributed to their destruction. This successful resistance is significant in more than one way. It bears witness not only to a revival of the old heroism, but also to the existence of an abundant and vigorous population. It would seem, then, that there had been a cessation or decrease of those immoral practices which in the classic age of Greek civilisation made war on family life. The improvement has been ascribed to the spread of Christianity,[2] but there seem to be no grounds for such an assumption. It does not appear from independent evidence that the new religion had made the advances that would have been necessary to account for so great a change; nor were its doctrines favourable either to family life or to the military spirit. And, what seems decisive, the most vigorous resistance to the invaders was offered at Athens, the last city in the Empire to be converted to Christianity. But even were the contention true, it would detract little if at all from the ethical value of Hellenism. Christianity could only convert the Greeks into heroic

[1] Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte,* II., p. 441.
[2] In Sir Richard Jebb's *Modern Greece,*

patriots by acting on the latent possibilities of the Greek genius itself. It exercised no such magic in Gaul and Britain.

If, indeed, the question of obligation be once raised, we shall have to ask not so much what the Greeks owe to Christianity as what it owes to them. The answer has been already given by modern criticism. Catholicism in its original and only true sense is but the theological expression for universal Hellenic humanity. The much-decried Tübingen school has made good at least one point—that the Church was first converted from a Jewish sect into a world-wide society by the Hellenist St. Paul, who in his turn owed his conversion to the martyr-death of the Hellenist Stephen. And, quite apart from the question of admission to church-membership, the root-ideas of Pauline theology are only intelligible when interpreted in the light of Stoic metaphysics. In other words, where Christianity differs most widely from Judaism it approaches most nearly to Greek thought. And this applies not only to faith, but to morals. The antithesis between Hebraism and Hellenism still remains valid, though in a sense different from that assumed by Matthew Arnold. We do not exactly go for lessons in veracity or in justice, in gentleness or in breadth of sympathy, to the Jewish Scriptures; if we want them, we shall find them given with incomparable charm in the literature of the Ionian race. And so long as moral training shall be imparted through Christian agencies it is vitally necessary that those agencies should be kept in touch with the sources whence the early Church derived its most human inspiration. For

present purposes, then, the ethical value of Hellenism may be defined as its influence in fixing attention on the purely moral side of the popular religion, and in preparing men's minds for the eventual reception of a morality independent of religious sanctions.

THE INFLUENCE OF PHILOSOPHY ON GREEK POLITICAL LIFE

FOR nearly a century the theories of ancient philosophy have been studied with an industry and a sagacity that leave nothing to be desired, and the results have been not incommensurate with the effort put forth. We know early Greek thought better than it was known to Plato and Aristotle; we understand Plato and Aristotle themselves better than they were understood by their immediate disciples; we can enter into the mind of the Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics better, perhaps, than Cicero, Plutarch, or Sextus could. More recently, also, attention has been drawn to the immense practical influence of philosophy on the life of the Roman Empire during the first two centuries of its existence, as revealed in literature, religion, and law. Not only in the declamations of its satirists, but also in the decorations of its tombs; not only in the lives of its most virtuous, but also in the rescripts of its most vicious rulers; not only in heathen polemics, but also in Christian apologetics and dogmatics, the same all-pervasive spirit may be traced. But what philosophy did for Greece, except to destroy religion and to undermine public life, is a question that has not been very deeply studied. In these matters most of us bow to the authority of Zeller, who is deservedly considered the greatest master of the subject. From him we

have learned to look on Greek speculation as tending to detach itself more and more from the concrete realities of life, and particularly from political life, as tending more and more to seek refuge from the lawlessness and oppression of the outer world in the inviolable sanctuary of the self-possessed, self-enjoying spirit. This isolating movement, begun during the Peloponnesian war, is supposed to have been consummated after the destruction of Greek liberty by Macedon, and to have realised itself, under various forms, in the doctrines of the Porch, the Garden, and the later Academy. Except in the negative sense there can, it would seem, be no question of any social influence exercised by such a philosophy as this.

But the later ages of Greek history may have been less degraded and hopeless than we imagine. In estimating the relative importance of men and things, our judgment is apt to be swayed by the prepossessions of a classical education. To know what happened in the sixth, and still more what happened in the fifth, century B.C. is justly deemed essential to liberal culture. That period is filled with some of the greatest events in human history, and illustrated by some of the most splendid monuments of human genius; to make them more interesting, some of the events may be studied in the narratives of eye-witnesses, and we may inspect some of the monuments for ourselves. But after the close of the great struggle between Athens and Sparta our sources flow more scantily and their purity becomes more suspected. The great stream of lyric and dramatic poetry entirely dries up, architecture and sculpture become weaker in themselves

and are less definitely related to contemporary life. Prose composition, indeed, attains the greatest excellence it has ever reached, but the very beauty of its masterpieces withdraws the attention of scholars from their historical setting by lifting them into a region of ideal and undated perfection. So, too, while the fourth century gives us some of the foremost characters of all time, they seem constructed on such a superhuman scale that we cannot think of them as being what Themistocles, Pericles, and Alcibiades had been, the leaders and representatives of their generation. The impression produced is that of a few colossal figures surrounded by mediocrities, and projected against a background of petty and sordid intrigue. So far from redeeming their age, they seem to make its baseness more evident, and the widespread conviction of its degeneracy more credible. Indeed, the conviction is one that originated with the philosophers and statesmen of the time. Those who hold that Greece succumbed to the Macedonian arms through her own inherent viciousness may quote Plato and Demosthenes in their support.

As we approach the third century matters become far worse. If, as the late Professor Freeman used to complain, many Greek scholars seem to think that all history ends with the sacrifice of Tissaphernes, the number of those must be few who pursue their studies beyond the Lamian war. Henceforth we are almost entirely without the guidance and stimulation of contemporary documents, and few modern historians have attempted the ungrateful task of piecing together a connected narrative out of the fragmentary materials that have

survived. Grote breaks off his work in disgust at the beginning of the Hellenistic period. Thirlwall carries his down to the destruction of Corinth, but Thirlwall is out of print, and is supposed to be out of date. Freeman's *History of Federal Government in Greece,* though abounding in eloquent passages, is, as a whole, unreadable. Droysen's *Geschichte des Hellenismus* would, both for style and scholarship, do honour to the literature of any country; but it has not, I believe, been translated into English. Adolf Holm has recently gone over the same ground in the fourth volume of his *Griechische Geschichte,* an English translation of which has appeared. He throws fresh light on some important points, but his closely packed summaries will be consulted by a very limited class of readers. And the same remark applies to Professor Julius Beloch, whose recently published volumes (*Griechische Geschichte*, III. and IV.) represent the last word of scholarship on this period.[1]

This lamentable dearth of information is the more to be regretted because the Hellenistic period was a time, not of decay and death, but of overflowing and fruitful life. It saw the seeds of a higher civilisation scattered over a region extending from the Ganges to the Atlantic. Nor did the universal diffusion of Greek ideas mean, what the diffusion of French and English ideas too often has meant, the effacement of national differences, the world-wide triumph of a single not very elevated standard

[1] In writing the above I was not aware that Professor Mahaffy's excellent work on *Greek Life and Thought from Alexander to the Roman Conquest* (2nd ed., 1896) supplied the English reader with an account, at once popular and erudite, of the period in question.

of opinion, feeling, taste, and manners. On the contrary, what was vital and original everywhere sprang up into rejuvenated activity under that electric stimulus. At the contact of Alexander's armies all India united herself under a single chief; and, as a consequence of that union, Buddhism was carried in triumph from the Himalayas to Ceylon. Persia recovered much of her ancient energy, and her religion first received a complete literary expression under her Philhellenic Parthian kings. Judæa, while clinging more passionately than ever to the Thora, felt her imagination swept by a new whirlwind of apocalyptic visions. A series of colossal temples rose along the banks of the Nile, reared by the munificence of the Ptolemies, as if to show that the land they ruled was Egypt for the Egyptians even more than Egypt for the Greeks. After the visit of a single Spartan general, Carthage enters on the most heroic period of her existence. Rome first develops her whole potentialities of greatness in the light of Hellenic thought.

Our own civilisation is more in touch with the age of the Diadochi than with the age of Pericles. The form of our tragic drama, the form and substance of our comedy, the love-interest of our novel, are derived from Menander. Our poets owe more to Theocritus than to Pindar. Before the present century the most admired statues in our museums came, without exception, from the later schools of sculpture. Above all, our science has been but the resumption and continuation of methods then first organised. Euclid systematised the geometry of the straight line and the circle; Apollonius worked out the geometry of conics;

Hipparchus taught men how to construct terrestrial and celestial maps; Aristarchus of Samos discovered the heliocentric system of astronomy; Archimedes created rational mechanics.

While the artistic and intellectual powers of the Greek genius were being exercised with unabated vigour, her military and political ability had not become extinct. Setting aside mythological characters, one-third of Plutarch's Greek heroes belong to the period after Alexander; and there were others whose lives he did not write. It seems incredible that this could have been an age of moral degeneracy, or that philosophy, possessing such an organisation as it had never enjoyed before, should not have been interested in the systematic reconstitution of society, especially since the revolutionary character of the times offered boundless opportunities for experiment. My object is to show that such an influence was actually exercised, proceeding from the schools of Athens, above all from Stoicism, as its source and centre. But to make this intelligible it will be necessary to trace briefly the relations that had connected philosophy with life in the previous course of its evolution.

With the Greeks the liveliest curiosity about the world was ever accompanied by the desire to make that world a worthier habitation for man. Their first thinkers were noted above all for a purely speculative interest in the constitution and origin of nature. Yet Thales, the acknowledged founder of philosophy, was quite as famous in his day for practical wisdom as for reach and daring of thought. We are told that he advised the twelve Ionian cities to form a confederation for the purpose of resisting

the aggressions of Crœsus—advice which, unhappily for themselves, they did not follow. If Heracleitus withdrew in disgust from public life, none the less did he recognise an identical law of existence and of conduct, a wisdom that is common to all things. "Those who speak with intelligence," he declares, "must hold fast to the common, as a city holds fast to its law, and even more strongly ; for all human laws are fed by one thing—the divine."[1] How he thought of nature as governed by an essentially moral law is shown by the saying that, if the sun were to transgress his measures, the Erinyes—the avenging handmaidens of justice—would find him out. In the same manner his predecessor, Anaximander, had represented the transitoriness of all individual existence as a vindication of eternal justice. Nor did the more mystical form assumed by Greek thought in Italy and Sicily lead to quietism or to paralysis of the moral will. Empedocles headed the democratic party in Agrigentum ; Zeno of Elea died in attempting to deliver his native city from a tyrant ; Melissus of Samos, who also belonged to the Eleatic school, defeated the Athenians in a sea-fight. Great uncertainty prevails about the history and teaching of the original Pythagorean school ; but thus much seems clear, that they combined an attempt to explain the universe by mathematical principles with an attempt to carry analogous principles into education and social discipline. Plato's scheme of social reform seems to have been largely suggested by their example.

[1] Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 139.

In all these instances the leading inspiration was evidently ethical. The organisation of the Greek city-state gave men ideas of law and order which they read into the physical world, conceiving it to be animated by a spirit like their own. But, so far, nature taught them no lessons that might not equally be learned in the Agora and the Boulê. An independent action of philosophy on life suggests itself to us for the first time in the relations between Anaxagoras and Pericles. For one thing, the new knowledge tended to clear the mind of superstition—no trifling advantage, when we remember how Nicias consummated the ruin of the Sicilian expedition by postponing his retreat a whole month in consequence of an eclipse of the moon. It is quite certain that Pericles, who had learned the cause of eclipses from Anaxagoras, would not have let his movements be hampered by any such scruple. But, if Plutarch is to be trusted, the mind of the great statesman was strengthened in a higher and more positive sense by his intercourse with the Ionian sage. The august spectacle of a universe where Reason reigned supreme gave, we are told, a certain inflexible majesty to the character of the democratic leader, and raised him above all subservience to the gusts of popular opinion. Whether it be historically true of Pericles or not, the idea remains important and suggestive. It has often seemed to me that Positivism, with its Religion of Humanity, leaves the individual insufficiently protected against the tremendous pressure of the race. Adequately to resist that pressure we need the conception of an existence beside which humanity itself shrinks into

insignificance, but which, so far from crushing or absorbing our own personality, fills and expands it to infinity. The enthusiasm of humanity finds its corrective and counterpoise in cosmic emotion.

Before Pericles was dead, a revolutionary idea, of which neither he nor Anaxagoras ever dreamed, had perhaps been already evolved from the Ionian philosophy. This was the idea of Nature, considered not merely as the indefeasible order of objective existence, but as the original and supreme standard of social equity, the ultimate court of appeal against whatever seemed arbitrary or oppressive in positive law, custom, tradition, and temporary fashion. Each speculative thinker had sought, with undoubting confidence that it was there and could be found, for a primordial reality at the root of things, calling it water, air, fire, the Infinite, and so forth, but meaning just what persisted or periodically reasserted itself in a world of change. This constant element was not necessarily conceived as a single material substance; it might be a variety of substances, or simple extension, or a definite relation, or a process; but it was always what we call a phenomenon, never a metaphysical abstraction or noumenon. In Kantian language, it lay within the limits of a possible experience. Opposed to it were the baseless, unstable, illusory opinions of the vulgar. Such in its first intention was the meaning of Nature, the philosophical equivalent for the greater gods of the old religion. As scientific curiosity extended itself from the material to the moral world, to the human race with its division into numberless nations, each speaking a different language or dialect, and

characterised by infinitely varying institutions, customs, and laws, yet in their dealings with one another appealing to a common standard of reasonableness and rectitude, there arose the obvious idea, Have we not here also to ask for a common principle from which all partial and local customs are so many ignorant, it may be mischievous, aberrations—in a word, for what exists by nature, as opposed to what exists by convention or law?

It is certain that the question was asked and the distinction drawn between φύσις and νόμος, but when or by whom the distinction was first drawn we do not know.[1] It occurs for the first time, unless I am mistaken, in the *Protagoras,* a somewhat early dialogue of Plato's, where we find it put into the mouth of the Sophist Hippias; and the evidence of Xenophon's *Memorabilia* goes to prove that it was associated with his teaching by others besides Plato. Modern historians of philosophy speak as if this distinction was the common property of all the Sophists, and was used by all with the same implications. In their opinion, the antithesis between Nature and Law was a mere pretext for invalidating the authority of Law, for releasing men from their obligation to obey the ordinances of the State, and therefore a powerful agent in the work of public demoralisation, at least when the oppression of the weak by the strong was defended as a natural right. If we are to believe Thucydides and Plato, such a justification of successful violence was actually attempted at the time of the Peloponnesian war; but to make Hippias or any other of

[1] It has been ascribed to Archelaus, the disciple of Anaxagoras, on the very doubtful authority of Laertius Diogenes.

the great Sophists responsible for such a perversion of their teaching would be like making Socrates and Plato responsible for the defence of injustice for delivering which their successor, Carneades, was expelled from Rome.

Let it be remembered that the only Sophists about whom we have any right to speak are Protagoras, Gorgias, Prodicus, and Hippias. The last is the only one who is known to have directly distinguished nature from law or convention. His words, as reported or imagined by Plato, are: "All of you who are here present I reckon to be kinsmen and friends and fellow-citizens, and by nature and not by law; for by nature like is akin to like, whereas law is the tyrant of mankind, and often compels us to do many things which are against nature. How great would be the disgrace, then, if we who know the nature of things.....should quarrel with one another like the meanest of mankind."[1] There is surely nothing sceptical, corrupting, or anti-social about the sentiment here expressed. Further, we have to note that arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy are mentioned among the subjects taught by Hippias[2]—a fact which seems to show that he studied the nature of man in connection with the nature of things. So far as we can make out, a somewhat similar method was followed by Prodicus. With regard to this teacher we have the precious, though scanty, contemporary evidence of Aristophanes, who, in the *Clouds*, compliments him on his eminent wisdom and learning, while in the *Birds* he playfully

[1] Plato, *Protagoras*, p. 337 B.; Jowett's trans.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 318.

announces a new theory of evolution that is to send Prodicus away howling—a clear proof of the interest taken by the Ceian moralist in such inquiries. How far he attempted to connect ethics with physics must, in the absence of more detailed information, remain uncertain ; but his own well-known apologue, *The Choice of Hercules*, as reported to us by Xenophon, affords some suggestive hints of a tendency in that direction. The word "nature" itself occurs three times over in a few lines ; and throughout there is a genuinely naturalistic assumption that pleasure is altogether censurable when it has not been purchased by a corresponding outlay of effort and fatigue. Here, for the first time, we catch sight of a principle pregnant with momentous and far-reaching consequences. For, by parity of reasoning, it might be urged that no man has any right to wealth that he has not earned by an equivalent amount of useful work, which is the root-idea of socialism ; or, again, that one class of the community should not receive gratuitous benefits at the expense of another class, which is the root-idea of Spencerian individualism. Plato, who, for reasons unknown, particularly hated Prodicus, only mentions him to ridicule the pedantic precision with which he insisted on the accurate use of language.[1] Altogether, we have here a master of encyclopædic range — physicist, philologist, and moralist—with Hippias, the earliest precursor of Stoicism and of modern university training.

[1] Curiously enough, the late Mr. R. H. Hutton dwells on the extreme accuracy and precision of the late Professor Malden as a trait of distinction between that scholar and the ancient Sophists (in the Memoir prefixed to Bagehot's *Literary Studies*, p. xv.).

We gather from the report of Xenophon that the moral censure of Prodicus was directed against the vices of the rich and luxurious, special emphasis being laid on their artificial, unnatural character. The polemic thus begun would easily extend into an attack on all civilisation considered as a departure from the state of nature, from the innocence and simplicity of savage man; and it would be accompanied by a tendency to hold up as examples for imitation the nations who had remained at or near the primitive condition of mankind. We generally associate this tendency with the philosophy of the eighteenth century; but it is now known that Rousseau and Diderot were merely taking up the tradition of Greek thought. Although it may be traced back to Hesiod, the theory of a golden age still partially surviving among savages did not reach its full expansion before the middle of the fourth century B.C.; but there is evidence that it was already eagerly canvassed in the circles which gathered round the great Sophists, and could show that most satisfactory proof of vitality which is afforded by the rise of an antagonistic theory. To the glorification of nature was opposed the glorification of progressive civilisation; to the study of astronomy and physics was opposed the study of poetry, eloquence, modern history, and political institutions; to the ethical standards and sanctions derived from the healthy balance of the organic functions were opposed other standards and sanctions derived from the exigencies of the social state and the steady pressure of public opinion. At the head of this humanistic school apparently stood Protagoras; and nothing can

better illustrate the sharp antagonism of the two ethical methods than a remark put into his mouth by Plato, so unlike anything else in the *Dialogues* that we must accept it as characteristic, if not as the reproduction of an actual utterance. "I would have you consider that he who appears to you to be the worst of those who have been brought up in laws and humanities would appear to be a just man and a master of justice if he were to be compared with men who had no education, or courts of justice, or laws, or any restraints upon them which compelled them to practise virtue—with the savages, for example, whom the poet Pherecrates exhibited on the stage at the last year's Lenæan festival. If you were living among men such as the man-haters in his Chorus, you would be only too glad to meet with Eurybates and Phrynondas, and you would sorrowfully long to revisit the rascality of this part of the world."[1] A somewhat similar vein of hostility to barbarism may, I think, be traced in the introduction to the history of Thucydides. It is significant, too, that, with many a tale of Greek cruelty to relate, his strongest expressions of horror are reserved for the savagery of the Thracians, and particularly for their massacre of all the children in a large boys' school at Mycalessus.

Greek thinkers habitually sought to clothe their principles in the most paradoxical form they could devise. Protagoras and Gorgias were not content to advocate humanistic studies at the expense of physical science; they tried to destroy the idea of

[1] Plato, *Protagoras*, 327 c (Jowett's Trans.). Robert Lowe once quoted this passage with the keenest enjoyment.

Nature, root and branch. Protagoras taught that "Man is the measure of all things"; in other words, moral obligations and distinctions must be founded on the needs of a progressive society, not on the abstraction to which the physiocratic philosophers appeal. Gorgias set to work in a still more radical fashion. He wrote a treatise with the significant title, *On Nature or Nothing,* in which he maintained, first that nothing exists; secondly, that if anything existed it could not be known; and thirdly, that if anything existed and could be known, the individual possessing that knowledge could not communicate it to others. This, as the worthy Tiedemann observes, was "going much farther than common sense permits"; but the Greeks, as I have said, loved paradoxical statements; and Gorgias probably meant no more than Joseph de Maistre when he asked the apostles of "la Nature," "Qui est donc cette femme?" or than Alfred de Musset, when he put the equally difficult question, "Le cœur humain de qui, le cœur humain de quoi?"

Like the opposing cosmologies of Heracleitus and Parmenides at an earlier period of Greek thought, the rival theories of the physiocrats and the humanists each contained an element of truth, and the future progress of ethics depended on the recognition and combination of both. Since Protagoras a number of thinkers, among whom Professor Huxley may be mentioned as the last, but not the least, have shown that nature, apart from man, is anything but a safe moral guide, and that what she seems to inculcate is, in fact, the supremacy of brute force. On the other hand, the great

diversity of moral codes observed at different times and in different places points to the necessity of some objective principle by which they must be tested, unless we are to resign ourselves to complete scepticism on the subject of right and wrong. Here physical science comes to the rescue by teaching us to look at things rather than words, and to follow the lines of demonstrative evidence rather than the shifting currents of popular opinion. But only the study of human interests as such can tell us what things we should look at, and what kind of proof the nature of the case demands. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, by creating the dialectic method and applying it to ethics, made a good start in this direction—so good, indeed, as completely to overshadow the predecessors whose ideas they appropriated and combined. Worse than this, some loose declamations of Plato and some special attacks on the rhetoricians and oligarchs of his own time have been construed into a distinct charge of immoral teaching brought against the great Sophists of the fifth century. Undoubtedly the naturalistic and humanistic principles severally admit of being pushed to anti-social consequences. The claim of the strong man—or, as he would call himself, the born ruler of mankind—to lord it over his fellows, and to gratify all his appetites at their expense, may be upheld as a natural right. A misinformed or deluded public opinion may be erected into the supreme standard of truth and justice, while the art of misinforming and deluding it may be inculcated as the first qualification of a statesman. But the Socratic dialectic, with its principle that the germs of truth exist in every

mind and in every belief, is also capable of disease and corruption. We owe to it—beginning with Plato, or, perhaps, even with Socrates himself—the organised hypocrisy that defends the public profession and propagation of superstitious beliefs as the only form under which philosophic truth can safely circulate among the ignorant masses.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that the teaching of the Sophistic schools, based as it was on principles of everlasting validity, possessed merely negative or transitional significance. There is reason to suppose, from incidental references in Plato and Aristotle, that it continued to win adherents through the two generations that followed the death of Socrates. Above all, the note of naturalism became increasingly dominant, and powerfully affected the Socratic schools themselves. Plato's writings are a good example of the tendency. His earliest dialogues are almost entirely humanistic, with only slight or depreciatory references to nature; but in the *Republic* physiocratic considerations are already prominent, and in the *Laws*, a very late work, they meet us at every step, in connection, be it observed, with a very high and pure morality. Aristotle also refers to nature as a moral standard, the validity of which he recognises, although he cannot accept all the consequences drawn from it by some other philosophers.

Authorities are still divided on the question whether the influence which we have seen to be so potent in speculation was, or was not, mischievous in practice. Most German historians continue to believe that a decline in Greek morality

began with the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war, and continued without intermission down to the advent of Christianity; and they make Sophisticism responsible for at least the inception of the process. Traditions are very strong in German universities, and it has become a tradition in those seats of learning that to take fees for lecturing and to throw doubt on the popular mythology is very reprehensible conduct—when practised by an ancient Greek. It sometimes actually led people to believe in the right of the stronger! Fortunately there is one German, Professor Julius Beloch, who, having the advantage of living in Italy, has dared to think for himself. This brilliant and original historian not only vindicates the Sophists, as Grote and others had done before him, but makes short work of the whole charge of demoralisation brought against the Greeks. There is no surer test of a nation's moral standing than its conduct in time of war. If there is a virtue admitting of ocular and statistical demonstration, a virtue that can neither be concealed nor assumed, that virtue is humanity. Now Professor Beloch opportunely reminds us that the Greeks of the fourth century were much more humane than the contemporaries of Pericles.[1] Such horrors as the slaughter of the Theban prisoners by the Platæans and of the Platæan prisoners by the Thebans, of the Corcyræan aristocrats by the opposite faction and of the Melians by the Athenians, for no other crime than having refused to give up their independence, are justly branded with execration ; but it is unjustly

[1] *Griechische Geschichte*, I., p. 595.

forgotten that they find no counterpart in the next generation. We do not again hear of prisoners of war being shut up to die by thousands of slow torture in the quarries of Syracuse, nor yet of their being put to death by the more summary method of Lysander at Aigos Potamoi. The historian knows of only two cases in the wars of the fourth century where the storm of a besieged town was followed by the massacre of its male adult citizens —the capture of Orchomenus by the Thebans and the capture of Sestus by Chares.[1] The outburst of popular passion to which Phocion and his friends fell victims, though lamentable enough, is not to be compared with that which wreaked itself on the victorious generals of Arginusæ. Whether the persecution and exile of so many generals and statesmen, from Miltiades to Alcibiades, was due more to ingratitude mixed with envy on the part of the people, or to treason on the part of its leaders, may be doubted ; in any case there was guilt of the blackest kind somewhere, but guilt which we meet with only under a greatly attenuated form in the fourth century.

If we ask what was the cause of this wonderful change, the only possible answer is, the great revolution that philosophy had wrought in the minds of men. The mere habit of looking at things from a universal point of view has happily a certain power to enlarge the sympathies. Thus the rulers of Babylon, surrounded as they were by a learned priesthood, seem to have been much more merciful than the rulers of Assyria. Further-

[1] *Griechische Geschichte,* II., p. 441.

more, the three great ethical schools characterised above must, through their various principles, have exercised a still more direct influence on the social feelings. The physicists, by drawing attention to the universal elements of human nature, helped to break down the barriers of race, language, and nationality that so powerfully foster feelings of mutual hostility among men. The humanists saw with perfect clearness that a state of nature meant lawless violence; but their object was by means of systematic instruction still further to develop the tendencies that make for peace, order, mutual helpfulness, and elevated enjoyment. Such of them as taught rhetoric or the art of persuasion by words must have looked with peculiar horror on the régime of brute force; indeed, it is impossible to study the writings of Isocrates, the chief teacher of rhetoric in the fourth century, without recognising through all the man's vanity, inconsistency, and subservience to success a sense of justice and mercy utterly alien to the tone of the Melian Dialogue. Especially significant is the declaration of Isocrates that Hellenism is a privilege not of race but of culture, and therefore open to all mankind.[1] Finally the Socratic school, with its willingness to learn from every one, its appeals to the reason that is actual or latent in every man and in every woman, its exaltation of the soul above the body, and of the higher over the lower psychic activities, must have contributed largely to the good work of humanisation that was going on.

In attempting to trace the general influence of

[1] See above, p. 35.

philosophy on the spirit of the age we have been dealing with probabilities, of a high order indeed, but not affording the satisfaction of absolute certainty; and in the dearth of documentary evidence no more can be expected. But, on passing to the study of philosophy as an influence on the character of individual statesmen, we are no longer limited to conjecture; we have definite facts to show. Here our whole case might be staked on the name of Epaminondas, whom Professor Mahaffy calls "far the noblest of all the great men whom Greece ever produced, without a single flaw or failing."[1] This illustrious patriot was a pupil of Lysis, the Pythagorean, and became himself, in turn, a teacher of the whole state, devoting himself for years to the moral and intellectual elevation of his fellow-citizens. But what speaks most for the moral earnestness of Epaminondas is his refusal, after all those years of preparation for the deliverance of Thebes, to take part in the secret assassination of the oligarchs who were governing her as the servile agents of Lacedæmonian oppression. Philosophy had taught him a delicacy of conscience not only far in advance of the best public opinion of his own time, but also in advance of the sentiments entertained till a comparatively recent period by some Christian moralists. Another but inferior example of philosophy in action is furnished by Dion, the friend of Plato, and the first liberator of Syracuse. I am well aware of the prejudice under which the memory of this unfortu-

[1] *Rambles and Studies in Greece*, p. 227 (2nd ed.). I do not agree with the last words quoted. See Plutarch, *Eroticus*, xvii. 15; Athenæus, *Deipnosophistæ*, xiii., lxxxiii.

nate patriot must suffer in the minds of all English-speaking scholars. There is nothing in Grote's *History of Greece* to equal for interest and pathos his narrative of the two Sicilian expeditions of Dion and Timoleon ; and the total effect of that narrative unquestionably is to make the ill-starred philosophic aristocrat play the part of a foil to the higher and purer glory of the successful Corinthian democrat. It is, however, only fair to remember that Timoleon had the inestimable advantage of coming after Dion, and of profiting by his mistakes. We have also to note that the one blot on the fame of the great liberator, his not interfering to save the innocent wives and daughters of Hicetas from the cruel vengeance of the Syracusans, was the very last sin of which his predecessor would have been guilty. When pressed to put a treacherous enemy to death, Dion answered that his prolonged studies in the Academy had for their object the conquest of anger, envy, and all contentiousness ; that it was not enough merely to reciprocate the goodness of others, it was necessary also to forgive injuries and to be merciful to the transgressor ; that for the person who is first attacked to revenge himself, though legally justifiable, is by nature no less censurable than the attack, as springing from the same root of ungoverned passion ; that human wickedness, however savage, must at last yield to the effect of unwearied beneficence.[1] For us the most interesting point to note is that, as Curtius

[1] Plutarch, *Dion*, p. 979 A. The distinction between nature and law seems to point to a much older authority than Plutarch, probably a contemporary of Dion's. I have slightly paraphrased this sentence in order to make it more intelligible.

says, the expedition of Dion was an enterprise undertaken by the whole Academy in its collective capacity—a fact quite irreconcilable with the subsequent statement of the same historian, that philosophers were at this time more and more withdrawing themselves from the repulsive contact of public affairs. Very significant also of the increased power now exercised by ideas is the desire shown by the younger Dionysius, and in a less degree even by his detestable father, to stand well in the opinion of Plato. So also is the selection of Aristotle as the tutor of young Alexander.

Thus far we have seen philosophy occupied in the work of systematising the moral law, reducing it to simple principles, connecting it with the eternal constitution of the universe, and developing it in the direction of a more comprehensive humanity. We have now to study it under the more stirring aspect of a reforming and revolutionary force, as an endeavour taken up by serious statesmen to reconstitute society on a basis of economic justice. In this connection the briefest reference to Plato must suffice, as that master's searching criticism of contemporary life and his twofold attempt to reconstruct it from the bottom up are, or ought to be, familiar to every student, if only for the unrivalled literary splendour of the writings in which they are embodied. Moreover, the subtlety and complexity of his genius raise Plato so high above the age that he cannot be taken as representing its general philosophical tendencies, although his works may be used as affording valuable evidence of the direction in which they pointed. The great word of that age, as of our own eighteenth century,

was "Back to Nature!" and then also, as with Rousseau, the ordinances of Nature were interpreted in a levelling, democratic, socialistic sense, quite remote from the sharp class-distinctions of Plato. We have seen how Hippias, whom the young Plato made a butt for his ridicule, implicitly proclaimed the natural brotherhood of mankind. We learn from a fragment of Aristotle that a later Sophist named Lycophron declared nobility of birth to be a baseless privilege,[1] while another Sophist, Alcidamas, vindicated freedom as a natural right[2] —a principle which, as we know from Aristotle's *Politics,* was unhesitatingly pushed on to the absolute condemnation of slavery.

Those who, like these generous philosophers, have persuaded themselves that liberty, equality, and fraternity are natural to man, easily come to believe that this happy state was realised in the primitive condition of the race. We get a glimpse of their belief on this subject from the *Laws* of Plato, who, as I have said, came very much under their influence in his old age. He tells us that the men who lived immediately after the Deluge were "simpler, more manly, more temperate, and more just" than his own contemporaries (*Laws*, 679 E); and he attributes their superior virtue to their undeveloped industrial condition, to the absence alike of poverty and of wealth. The next step was to look round for a people among whom these delightful traits of primitive humanity had been preserved. It was found in the Scythians. Ephorus, a pupil of Isocrates, and the greatest

[1] Quoted by Stobæus, *Florilegium,* p. 494, 24.
[2] *Oratores Attici* (Didot), II., p. 316.

historian of later Greece, seems to have constructed a fancy picture of that barbarous race, which was received with unquestioning faith through the whole of antiquity, and in a revived form has even affected modern thought. Justice was represented as the most essential characteristic of these nomads; envy, hatred, and fear were unknown among them; such was their horror of taking even animal life that they subsisted entirely on milk; and they lived in a state of perfect communism, holding property, wives, and children in common, so as to constitute a single united family.[1]

Various causes combined to familiarise Greek social philosophy with the idea of communism. To a certain extent it had no doubt prevailed among the Hellenic tribes before they left the nomadic state, and the tradition was never entirely lost. When they settled in a new country the land would be most naturally distributed in equal portions among the conquerors, and any fresh territory that was subsequently annexed would be similarly disposed of. The rise of manufactures and commerce, with the accompanying introduction of a metallic currency, brought about a great inequality of wealth, leading to violent political disorders, which, in the case of Solon's legislation, necessitated a forcible remission of debts by the State—a precedent never afterwards forgotten. Democracy, which at first meant deliverance of the poor from the oppression of the rich, afterwards came to mean a more or less disguised distribution of the property of the rich among the poor, and of the

[1] Pöhlmann, *Geschichte des antiken Kommunismus*, I., pp. 117 *sqq.*

tribute paid by the subject cities among all classes, without any disguise whatever. Meanwhile a first rough analysis of social phenomena had led philosophers to the conclusion that covetousness was the root of all evil, that murder, robbery, and other crimes arose from the unequal distribution of property, or rather from its mere existence, for, as Menander said—

> With naught to take no man would e'er be wicked.

From the prevalent view of marriage it followed that wives, like any other kind of property, were to be held in common. Strange as it may seem, the idea of such a revolution, so far from being regarded as a degradation, was welcomed with joy by the women. When, in 392, Aristophanes took communism as the subject of one of his wittiest comedies, the *Ecclesiazusæ,* he represented it as the work of the Athenian women, who go to the poll disguised as men, and change the institutions of the State by a snatch vote; and Epictetus, writing five centuries later, attributed the enthusiasm of the Roman ladies for Plato's *Republic* entirely to its proposal that there should be a community of wives.[1]

Aristophanes is our earliest authority for the existence of communism as a political ideal. It has, indeed, been maintained that his exhibition of it on the stage was intended as a satire on the proposals of Plato. But it seems most unlikely that even the first half of the *Republic* had been completed when the philosopher was only thirty-four; unlikely also that Plato should not have been

[1] Didot, *Fragmenta,* p. 53.

mentioned by name in the play, if not actually brought on the scene. Moreover, in the *Republic* communism is carefully restricted to the governing class; not till long afterwards, in the *Laws*, is it proclaimed as the ideally best arrangement for all mankind. I have already called attention to the remarkable fact that the *Laws* is saturated with a naturalism quite foreign to the earlier dialogues. What is the inference? Plainly, that communism (in both kinds) was a standing doctrine of the naturalistic school, and that it probably originated with the immediate successors of Hippias and Prodicus. Most unfortunately, we only know that such persons existed through incidental references in Plato and Aristotle; the Cynics, who bore the same relation to the philosophic naturalists that the Franciscans bore to the Dominicans, have completely superseded them in the notices of later compilers. But, even in the scanty utterances of Antisthenes and Diogenes, clear traces of a communistic theory have been preserved; and it emerges full blown in what was practically by far the most important of the ancient philosophies, Stoicism.

We are apt to think of the later Athens as divided among four or more equally serious or equally frivolous schools of philosophy. But in reality the Lyceum was devoted almost exclusively to physical science; the Epicureans were a small, uninfluential group of recluses; the Academicians, after abandoning the mathematical mysticism of Speusippus, contented themselves with a negative criticism chiefly directed against the doctrines of the Porch. This last alone gave a training at once

positive, encyclopædic, and fruitful, mingling with every honourable pursuit, delivering its message to all men, and holding up, by the example of its teachers, no less than by the rigour of its tenets, such a standard of righteousness and purity as none but the prophets of Israel had raised before. So strong, indeed, are the traces of a Semitic origin among the chief Stoics, beginning with its founder, Zeno, that their moral earnestness has been attributed to a peculiar quality resident in the genius of the race to which the prophets also belonged. But this seems a very fanciful explanation of Stoicism. Taking them altogether, the Semites have never been remarkable for a high moral tone, least of all the Phœnician branch to which Zeno belonged. If the foreign extraction of the early Stoics betrayed itself at all, it was in a certain absolute, unconditional, uncompromising tone of thought common to all Asiatics, and due less to any racial idiosyncrasy than to the habits inbred by immemorial despotism. How little race has to do with it is evident from the reappearance of a precisely similar tone among the Russian novelists of the present day, who have imbibed it from the same environment. As a consequence of this rigorous absolutism, the Stoics abolished the distinction between mind and matter; they placed the world under the unconditional control of reason; they asserted the unbroken regularity of natural law; they substituted determinism for free will; they insisted, against Aristotle, that virtue constituted not the leading element, but the whole of happiness; and they claimed for perception an unerring certainty. But in every point of their

system they did but develop ideas long familiar to Greek philosophy; and in their love of paradoxical statement, at least, they were entirely Greek. As a means of drawing attention, their paradoxes were perfectly successful, so much so, indeed, that down to the present day public opinion assumes almost without question that every philosopher is indifferent to pain and inaccessible to emotion; that he knows everything and can do everything, provided it be not of too frivolous a character; and that he is, or would like to pass for being, impeccable and infallible—in other words, that he answers to the ancient caricature of a Stoic. In reality, the Stoics never professed or required insensibility to pleasure and pain; they merely asserted, as we also do, the supreme and incommensurable value of moral goodness; and in ascribing all manner of merits and accomplishments to their ideal sage they merely demanded, as some of us also do, the systematic application of scientific principles to the whole field of human activity. But that the ideal sage had ever been realised on earth they did not believe; and if their principles suffered any sense of humour to survive they must have smiled at the *naïveté* of a Macedonian officer who, hearing that the wise man was an excellent general, joined the school in hopes of becoming one himself.[1]

At the moment when Zeno first proclaimed his message under the painted portico of Athens it seemed as if all free and noble public life had come to an end in Greece. That fourth empire, so well

[1] Plutarch, *Aratus*, xxiii., p. 1037 f.

described by the Book of Daniel as "a beast terrible and powerful and strong exceedingly with great iron teeth, devouring and breaking in pieces and stamping the residue with his feet," had devoured her last patriots and trampled her liberties into the mire. To the unexampled clemency of Philip and Alexander had succeeded the terrorism of their brutal generals. A successful military adventurer, Demetrius Poliorcetes, remarkable not less for his frightful profligacy than for his shining abilities, was lodged in the Parthenon, and received divine honours from the servile Athenians. All the most virile elements of the community were drawn off to Asia and Egypt by the lucrative prospects of mercenary service. It would not have been surprising if, in the circumstances, no lesson but that of fatalistic indifference to outward events had been learned by the degenerate youths who divided their time between the boudoir of the hetaira and the lecture-hall of the sage. Nevertheless, Zeno lived to see the last great struggle for Greek independence begin; his successors saw its temporary victory and its development into a movement that seemed to promise the realisation of their own social ideals.

In the year 280 B.C. a Gallic storm, like that which had devastated Italy more than a century before, broke on the Hellenic world. Macedonia, whose proud boast it was to shield civilisation against barbarism, succumbed at once to the shock, and her usurping king, Ptolemy Keraunos, fell in battle with the invaders. The human deluge poured on, but was arrested and flung back by the unsupported levies of central Greece. Their

heroism still lives for us embodied in the form of the Apollo Belvedere, the marble copy of a bronze statue erected to commemorate the repulse of the barbarians from Delphi, and representing the god in the act of shaking his shield in their faces.[1] Other famous works of plastic art owe their inspiration to the same desperate conflict, as it afterwards raged in Asia Minor, such as the dying Gaul of the Capitol; the group of a Gaul supporting the body of the wife whom he has just slain, and plunging a sword into his own breast, in the Museo delle Terme at Rome; also, perhaps, those Pergamene reliefs which are now the glory of Berlin. But it was not merely in art that the victorious consciousness of resurgent Hellenic life found expression. Sparta exhibited all her ancient heroism in repelling an attack made on her by Pyrrhus, the greatest general of the age; a few years afterwards Athens made a desperate but unsuccessful effort to shake off the Macedonian yoke. This, which Droysen calls her last but her most honourable attempt to recover her ancient liberty—an attempt first rescued from oblivion in modern times by the great historian Niebuhr—is known as the Chremonidean war from its leader, Chremonides, a friend, perhaps a disciple, of Zeno. Droysen has no doubt that the movement was inspired by Stoicism, which had now been taught for a whole generation at Athens, and was diffused through all Hellas by the students who had flocked from every quarter to the intellectual metropolis, as well as by Arcesilaus, the high-

[1] According to Beloch (III., p. 582), the Gauls actually took and plundered Delphi; but, as they were subsequently defeated by the Greeks, the Apollo retains its symbolic value.

minded scholarch of the Middle Academy.[1] Not that Zeno himself was an enthusiast for republican liberty; the tenour of his doctrine was rather favourable to monarchy, and he was personally the friend and confidant of King Antigonus Gonatas, against whom this rising was directed. But the lessons of moral earnestness and zeal once learned cannot be appropriated by any political party; they can, however, raise partisanship to a higher level by investing it with the authority of a divine mandate or consecrating it to the service of an impersonal ideal. Thus the modern Stoicism of Carlyle[2] gave fresh energy to aspirations that he misunderstood or despised; and at the moment when the master was inditing his *American Iliad in a Nutshell* many of his unknown disciples may have been dying in order that human beings should not be engaged as servants for life against their will.

The Chremonidean war only served to rivet the Macedonian yoke more firmly on the necks of the Athenians. But the emancipating movement spread like wildfire in the Peloponnesus. Two disciples of Arcesilaus, Ecdemus and Demophanes, slew the unlawful ruler of their native city Megalopolis, and restored it to freedom; they then aided Aratus in achieving the still more glorious deliverance of Sicyon, and finally, at the invitation of Cyrene, crossed the sea to give that great African colony the blessing of an orderly republican

[1] *Geschichte des Hellenismus,* III., pp. 228 *sqq.*

[2] Of course this is not to be understood as meaning that Carlyle was a Stoic in *practice.*

government.[1] Federation, an entirely new political experiment, was tried with success by the famous Achaian League; its President, Aratus, drove the Macedonian garrison from Corinth, and gave Athens the independence that she could not achieve for herself. How high the tide of enthusiasm was running appears from the story of Lydiades, a noble youth who, having possessed himself of supreme power in Megalopolis, and exercised it some years for the public good, voluntarily surrendered his autocracy and descended to the rank of a private citizen, whence he was soon raised by the free votes of the people to the presidency of the Achaian League.

So far philosophy had done wonders, but its greatest triumph still remained to win. This was the reconstitution of the Spartan State. One of the most curious chapters in the history of speculation relates to the use made of Sparta and her institutions in the schools of Athens. Professor Edward Caird has called attention, from a Hegelian point of view, to the remarkable union in Rousseau's mind of faith in nature with faith in education.[2] Just the same combination was exhibited by Rousseau's Greek predecessors; and as they found a model of uncorrupted natural virtue in Scythia, so they found an equally perfect model of artificial training in Sparta. It was supposed that the much-admired system which produced a Leonidas and a Gorgo, an Argileonis and a Brasidas, had been created in all its pieces by the

[1] Polybius, X., 22. The reference is wrongly given in Droysen.
[2] *Essays on Literature and Philosophy*, I., 120 *sqq.*

legislator Lycurgus and preserved intact during several centuries after his death. But in truth the educational and semi-socialistic romance that we read in Plutarch, while it embodies some features common to the more primitive Dorian tribes, was in great part evolved out of their own moral consciousness by several generations of philosophers. Lycurgus is a pure myth, the human incarnation of an old Spartan god ;[1] the equal division of land attributed to him no doubt represents an actual distribution of conquered territory among the predatory warriors who had established themselves by the Eurotas ; but we have no reason to believe that a permanent equality of landed property was legally provided for ; at any rate, in the historical period we find the distinction between rich and poor as sharply emphasised at Sparta as anywhere else.[2]

The Greeks are a people who have always been more influenced by memory or hope than by immediate reality, and neither the complete overthrow of Sparta by Epaminondas nor her subsequent isolation from Panhellenic politics detracted anything from the traditional adoration paid her by popular rhetoricians and philosophical historians who continued freely adding to the picture of her primitive perfection. At last the glamour that she had so long exercised on others was reflected back on herself, and the fictitious legislation of Lycurgus was taken up in all seriousness by her more educated children as a charter still claiming their

[1] I am aware that an attempt has recently been made to vindicate his historical reality.

[2] Pöhlmann, *ut ante*, p. 102.

obedience and support. A reform of some kind was, indeed, imperatively needed, for the concentration of property in a few hands, everywhere a pressing evil, had been carried further, perhaps, in Sparta than in any other Greek state, and was eating away what still remained of her defensive military power. A modern historian has explained this economic revolution by the peculiar position that Sparta occupied as an emporium for what was then a kind of merchandise in extensive request—namely, mercenary soldiers.[1] Then, as always, the Peloponnesus supplied the best material of this description, and the *condottieri* who dealt in it brought enormous sums of money into the country. But not many benefited by the traffic. While the ruling class in Sparta had dwindled to seven hundred families, only a hundred of these possessed any property whatever. The young king Agis proposed to remedy this state of things by abolishing debts and dividing the land among the poorer citizens and the Periœcians. He led the way by surrendering to the State his own vast estates, together with personal property to the value of six hundred talents (£150,000). Some members of the royal family and some leading politicians were won over to the scheme, which at first seemed to carry all before it. But Agesilaus, the young king's uncle, was only anxious for the abolition of debts, in which he was personally interested, and found means to postpone the division of land, by which he would have been a loser. Meanwhile the Conservatives rallied their forces, a reaction set in,

[1] Holm, *Griechische Geschichte,* IV., p. 287.

and Agis was seized by the Ephors and strangled in prison, together with his mother and grandmother. His widow Agiatis, the richest heiress in Sparta, was obliged to marry Cleomenes, son of King Leonidas, the official head of the reactionary party. But the noble Queen contrived to inoculate her young husband with the ideas of the martyred Agis; and the teaching of his heroic mother Cratesicleia was doubtless thrown into the same scale. Nor was his mind only subjected to the passionate impulses of feminine affection and grief; a higher and steadier discipline lent its aid to the great work.

If in the case of Agis we can only assign to philosophy a remote and general influence, in so far as his animating ideals were a creation of thought, in the case of Cleomenes it becomes a direct and demonstrable agency. One of Zeno's most eminent disciples, a certain Sphærus, was at that time living in Sparta. He came from a Greek colony on the northern shore of the Euxine, and had grown up in the neighbourhood of those Scythians whose primitive communism excited such admiration in the schools of Athens. Among his numerous treatises, one on *Socrates and Lycurgus* and another on *The Laconian Constitution* are mentioned. This man became the intimate friend of Cleomenes, and assisted him in planning the great reforms which the young king, on gaining supreme power, pressed through with relentless vigour. For details I must refer to the stirring narrative of Plutarch. The agrarian reforms are carried out in the teeth of all opposition; a new body of stalwart citizen-soldiers is created; city

after city opens its gates to the champion of the poor; Sparta resumes her old place as the leading state in Peloponnesus, in all free Hellas; her victorious king hopes to supersede the clever but cowardly Aratus as president of the Achaian League. Then comes the fatal reaction. Those who had hoped for a general abolition of debt turn against the reformer whose measures were dictated only by the public interest; Aratus, to his eternal shame, purchases the help of a Macedonian army against Cleomenes by surrendering the Acrocorinthus to Antigonus Doson. Defeated in battle, and already heart-broken by the loss of his adored wife Agiatis, the Spartan king refuses to end his sufferings by suicide. The sayings put into the mouths of great men are generally apocryphal; but the sentiment attributed to Cleomenes on this occasion is at least characteristic of the Stoic philosophy in which he had been bred. When urged to choose death rather than an ignominious flight to Egypt, he answered, as Plutarch tells us, that it is disgraceful either to live or to die for ourselves alone. But Egypt, as usual, proved a broken reed, and Cleomenes perished in an attempt to rouse the Greek population of Alexandria against its effeminate tyrant. The reformed constitution of his beloved Sparta had already been destroyed by Antigonus.

These events occurred between the years 243 and 221 B.C. Less than a century later a series of events took place in Rome offering such a close resemblance to the agrarian revolution in Sparta that, were not the historical reality of both proved by irrefragable evidence, we might almost suppose the one story to be a replica of the other. I refer,

of course, to the reforms of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus. Again, we find a generous, enthusiastic, and high-born young man seeking to rescue the pauperised masses from their degradation by the re-enactment of an obsolete law; again, the first reforming effort is stifled by illegal violence in the blood of its originator; again, it is resumed by a younger and far stronger successor, the transition being this time also effected through the instrumentality of a woman, the illustrious Cornelia; again, after a brief and brilliant period of success, the democratic autocracy succumbs to an energetic reaction of the propertied classes, passively aided by a fickle populace. But what interests us most of all is to observe that the Gracchi also were prepared for their generous enterprise by a Stoic philosopher, the Cuman Blossius, a pupil of the great school of Tarsus—"no mean city"—whose intellectual atmosphere was destined to exert an incalculable action on the Apostle Paul. Here, then, we have a signal corroboration of the historical deduction that seeks in Greek philosophy, and more especially in Stoicism, or more generally in the physiocratic school, for a key to the systematic socialistic enterprises of antiquity.

It cannot be said that the result of those enterprises was in any way satisfactory. Discord, bloodshed, anarchy, and despotism were their most evident fruits. The movement set on foot by Agis was followed by nearly a century of class-warfare, that at last necessitated the armed intervention of Rome and the reduction of the Peloponnesus under her sway. In Rome itself the period of civil wars dates from Tiberius Gracchus. In so

far as they contributed to the foundation of the empire, we have no reason to complain of the result, but it was one that he never anticipated; while the distributions of cheap corn introduced by his brother Gaius proved a permanent source of demoralisation to imperial, as well as to republican, Rome.

Socialism as we know it to-day is lineally connected through French and German thought with the socialism of the Greek naturalists. There is, however, at least one marked distinction between the two, corresponding to the different forms of society that gave them birth. Ours is of the industrial, theirs of the military type. Every ancient city-state was more or less in the position of a besieged garrison or of a predatory band, and for the officers to appropriate most of the rations and all the booty was not only unjust, but suicidal. Cleomenes had for his sole object to restore the military supremacy of Sparta; the Gracchi must certainly have wished to recruit the population, and with it the armed strength of Italy. Hence, the redistribution of land was their watchword, capital being associated in their minds, not with the payment of low wages to the poor by the rich, but with the payment of high interest to the rich by the poor. The inference is obvious. If socialism failed to make way under a *régime* with which it had a natural affinity, its chances must be still weaker under an industrial and capitalist *régime*.

The social influence of philosophy in Greece is far from being exhausted by the humanitarian tendencies of the fourth century and the agrarian movement of the third century. The great part

played by women in the Spartan revolution belongs, I think, to a very much wider movement, inaugurated and sustained by philosophy. But this is a subject on which I am not now prepared to enter.

THE ALLEGED SOCIALISM OF THE PROPHETS[1]

M. ERNEST RENAN'S *History of the People of Israel* is a disappointing work. Of course, it has great merits. M. Renan can write well on any subject, and any man of ability can write well about the events recorded in the Old Testament. The book contains eloquent passages, masterly sketches of character, flashes of profound historical insight, and renderings from Hebrew poetry, such as might have been expected from the pre-eminent translator of Job. Some at least of the results of modern criticism are distilled into as easy reading as the feuilleton of a Parisian newspaper. Above all, the whole subject is treated with a freshness and freedom that it would be vain to expect even in the most unfettered theological professor. Still, we expected something more from M. Renan. As a Semitic specialist, a historian, and a philosopher, he might have added somewhat to our knowledge of Hebrew life and thought. Not only has he added nothing, he has not shown himself on a level with the best knowledge of the age. According to Professor Robertson Smith, he "simply ignores the more modern criticism."[2] A notion has somehow got abroad that the author of the *Vie de Jésus* represents the extreme of negation

[1] Written in 1893.

[2] *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church,* 2nd ed., p. 392.

in questions connected with the Biblical narratives. In fact, the leanings of M. Renan, like those of his countrymen generally, are to the conservative side. It will be remembered how through a dozen editions of the *Vie de Jésus* he upheld the apostolic authorship of the Fourth Gospel, and I do not know that he has ever given up the passage about Jesus Christ in Josephus. There is in truth a good deal of eighteenth-century rationalism about this author, a summary *à priori* rejection of the miraculous element combined with a rather uncritical acceptance of the narratives in which miracles occur; hence the effort to explain miracles as natural events, and, where this method cannot be successfully applied, the tendency to charge the narrators of such events with sheer, deliberate fraud.

It is not, however, of what M. Renan has left out that we have to complain so much as of what he has put in; or, perhaps, the less admirable side of his work might be summed up in a single phrase, "playing to the gallery." His audience consists very largely of persons whom I desire to mention with all respect—persons of the brightest intelligence, and, at least in the things of the intellect, of the most delicate taste. To their exacting demands, to their keen appreciation of what is excellent in style and brilliant in ideation, we owe the lucidity of French prose, the ingenuity and grace of French literature. Their opinion of a new play or a new novel is most valuable, and even on subjects requiring a certain amount of scholarship it is not to be despised. But you must not tell them to take much trouble; they like to think that their author is deeply read and laborious, but the result

must be put before them in a finished form, and it is only in their appreciation of form that they are severe. Inaccurate or inconsistent statements are allowed to pass under cover of epigrammatic phrases, and the critic that exposed them would forfeit his reputation for good breeding.

For the last thirty years M. Renan has been falling more and more under the influence of such a public as I have described. His first popularity was won by no unworthy acts; it came to him unsought, and, one fancies, as a not altogether agreeable surprise. As a seminarist he had learned to despise the lay public, and he has recently let us know that his sentiments towards them still savour of sacerdotal scorn. As a professor of Hebrew he has never, like some of his colleagues, laid himself out to attract the large mixed audiences that infest the lecture-rooms of Paris. It was not his fault if he wrote in a style of unrivalled delicacy and distinction, or if his profoundly disinterested historical studies supplied new weapons to the anti-clericalists with whom he sympathised rather less than with their opponents. But no man can be popular with impunity; common politeness seems to require one to take into consideration the tastes and wishes of one's most numerous admirers. M. Renan has never, I think, quite equalled either in expression or in thought the essays published a few years before his *Vie de Jésus*, and then only known to a select few. In comparing the later with the earlier volumes of his great work on the history of primitive Christianity, can one escape the impression of an increasing vulgarity, a growing sensationalism, and a tendency to enlarge

on scenes of lubricity and horror? The unfortunate series of dramatic attempts beginning with *Caliban,* and culminating in *L'Abbesse de Jouarre,* are only explicable on the theory that the great religious historian wished to win the applause of a class for whom the liveliest work on religion is not exciting enough. In the work of which I write, the *History of Israel,* the desire to please *les honnêtes gens,* as they are called in France—not, by any means, necessarily "honest people," but rather what we call "nice people," accomplished men and women of the world—has produced the most mischievous results. Unlike Carlyle's horse, M. Renan thinks that his first duty is to say clever things, and his efforts in this direction are not always very fortunate. At his best, no one has ever shown such perfect delicacy of touch, but he exercises this gift only on the condition of treating serious subjects in a serious manner. The gay Voltairean mockery that he sometimes affects does not seem to come natural to him; it sounds like the light talk of a heavy man; often flippancy has to do duty for wit.

This, however, is a mere matter of taste, and has little to do with the intrinsic value of the work. What the reader has to complain of is a thoroughgoing perversion of history in the interest of a flimsy theory. One might have expected from M. Renan a satisfactory treatment of the prophets of Israel. He is fully alive to their importance. He fully accepts the modern view of their teaching as the very soul of Hebrew history, and its highest documentary evidence as the first proclamation of absolute monotheism, the first ethical interpretation of religion, the immediate and adequate antecedent

of Christianity. To many his account of the prophets came as a revelation. Professor James Darmesteter tells us that even the *boulevardiers* were, for a moment, thrilled by the vision of those Titanic figures with their awful denunciations of idolatry and oppression, of selfish luxury and shameless vice. But I fear that the historian of Israel caught the ear of the *boulevardier* by accommodating himself freely to the language and sentiments of that cheerful and pleasure-loving personage, the modern Parisian equivalent of "the man about town." M. Renan has elsewhere told a certain story about a country curé who preached on the Passion of Jesus Christ in such moving terms that the whole congregation were melted into tears. "Do not weep, my children," exclaimed the kind old man, in much concern at their grief; "all this happened a long time ago, and perhaps it is not quite true either." It sometimes looks as if he had taken a leaf out of that excellent curé's book. The *boulevardier* must not make himself too anxious. Let him bear in mind that the prophets were very uncivilised persons, without a notion of politeness, who wrote a long time ago, "when morality needed to be affirmed and established." It will relieve him to hear that moral rigorism, although, after all, it was once of use, "now does humanity nearly as much harm as good."[1] Professor Darmesteter, who is a friend and admirer of M. Renan, might profit more by the master's example. He actually quotes Jeremiah's fierce sarcasm about "every man neighing after

[1] III., p. 155.

his neighbour's wife" as "an excellent description of the drama and fiction of our own day."

Not only did the prophets live a long time ago (before morality became superfluous), but the *boulevardier* may be comforted by the assurance that what they said was not quite true. "There is great exaggeration in the picture drawn by Amos of the crimes committed in the palace of Samaria. .....His ideas about rich scoundrels, thieving merchants, men of business, and monopolisers of corn, are those of a man of the people without any knowledge of political economy"[1] One cannot help being reminded of the same writer's remarks on the first chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans explaining the apostle's terrible picture of heathen vices, by his complete ignorance of good society.[2] St. Paul, we are told, entertained much the same absurdly exaggerated ideas about the debaucheries of the higher classes that an honest and simple-minded Socialist working man entertains now. I should not give much for the morals of good society in our own time if they at all resemble what we know to have been the habits of Græco-Roman society on the evidence of writers who had every opportunity for observing and not the slightest motive for maligning it. The secular literature of Samaria has perished, nor do we know what sort of songs those were that her nobles sang on their ivory couches; but the testimony of the other prophets, some of whom mingled freely in court-circles, goes to confirm the denunciations of Amos.[3] When the shepherd of Tekoa raises

[1] II., p. 432. [2] *Les Apôtres*, p. 309.
[3] Cf. Hosea iv. and Isaiah xxviii.

his voice against the oppression of the poor, he is silenced in the same off-hand manner. What he describes as monstrosities are, it seems, simply the plainest social necessities — lending money on security, payment of debts, and taxation. To the *boulevardier*, living under tolerably just laws tolerably well administered, the answer may seem conclusive ; but a scholar and an Eastern traveller ought not to be so limited in his ideas. M. Renan must surely know that taxation may be so adjusted as to become an instrument of the most hateful oppression, and that, though it may be a social necessity, it has over and over again endangered the very existence of society. We know no more of Ephraim than Amos and Hosea tell us ; but, fortunately, we are in a position to study the early history of Athens and Rome, the late history of the Roman Empire, the antecedents of the French Revolution, and the contemporary administration of Asiatic despotism—notably of Egypt before the English occupation—in the light of information that is above suspicion. From the Eupatrides to the pashas, every governing class invested with absolute power and unrestrained by moral scruples not only drains the people of their life-blood, it also brings the State to destruction unless it is saved by some such measure as Solon's partial cancelling of debts, the Licinian Rogations, or the Revolution of '89. For the indebtedness of the poorer classes is a direct consequence of the exorbitant taxes levied on them by the rich, to meet which they have to borrow money at usurious interest, at first to the no small profit of their oppressors, who continue to grow richer, while their subject grows

poorer, until the weakening of the foundation involves the whole edifice in ruin. Thus the artisan or peasant sees his tools and household goods wrung from him bit by bit, while the fruits of his industry, exchanged for foreign luxuries, are wasted in unproductive expenditure. The political economist would be faithless to common honesty if he condoned the rapine, whether lawless or legalised, by which the wealth of the Ephraimite nobles was acquired, and faithless to the principles of his own science if he sanctioned the vulgar ostentation and the vile sensuality to gratify which it was wasted. Luxury has been defended in modern times on the ground that it checks the growth of population. The practices described by Amos and Hosea would assuredly have that effect; but to check the growth of population was simple suicide among a handful of highland clans struggling for existence against the armies of Damascus and Assyria.

So far there is no difficulty in understanding the attitude of the prophets towards the rich and powerful class. An elementary knowledge of history explains it, and a deeper knowledge can but confirm the explanation. But M. Renan is quite put out by this attitude; this is not exactly the language that he or his friend the *boulevardier* would hear uttered in a fashionable Parisian pulpit. Strange to say, the spokesmen of God did not think twice before they damned persons of that quality. But a solution of the mystery is forthcoming. "The most deeply rooted idea of those old times," he informs us, "is that there are poor people because there are rich people.....wealth

being always the fruit of injustice."[1] Only a single fact is cited in proof of this sweeping assertion. Travelling in the East, M. Renan was once particularly struck by the goodness of the inhabitants of a certain village where he had spent the night. "It is because they are poor," explained his dragoman.[2] Probably the dragoman was right. One may experience the same contrast without going beyond Southern Europe. But to say that wealth produces wickedness is not to say that wickedness produces wealth. Of all authorities, the Hebrew Scriptures, with their not very refined doctrine of material and temporal rewards and punishments, seem least to sanction such an idea. The Book of Job, that admirable compendium of Hebrew philosophy, furnishes us with an excellent test-instance. Job has fallen from the greatest prosperity into extreme destitution and suffering. His friends are most anxious to prove that the catastrophe is due to some fault of his own. What then, on M. Renan's principle, would be more natural for them to urge than that the very fact of his having been so rich proves him to have been a public robber? Now it is true that Eliphaz the Temanite advances an argument (Job xxii. 5–10) tending this way ; but Job victoriously asserts his innocence against this as against all the other purely constructive accusations of his friends. Alike in the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Joseph, written down shortly before the appearance of the first literary prophets, and in the character of the virtuous woman,[3] composed after prophecy had

[1] II., pp. 424, 425. [2] III., p. 38.
[3] Proverbs xxxi. The character of the successful woman of

died out, we find the same intimate association between wealth and worth.

If the East can supply no parallel instances of such wanton attacks on the established social order, such denunciations of the rich simply because they are better off than other people, as the oldest written prophecies are here interpreted to be, the West comes to the rescue with illustrations of a kind peculiarly intelligible to a Parisian reader. The prophets were "radical and revolutionary journalists, declaiming their articles in the street. .....The first chapter of Amos is the first opposition leader that was ever published," and Amos himself the father of all such as contribute to the subversive press.[1] Like the modern Nihilist, the Hebrew thinker held that if the world cannot be just it had better not exist.[2] But by justice the prophets mean Socialism, and "Socialism is of Hebrew origin. It has regard above all things to strict justice, and to the happiness of the greatest number."[3] It is a point of honour with M. Renan to contradict himself frequently, and isolated phrases of his must not be taken too seriously; but here he carries on the same idea from volume to volume, and when the scene changes from Samaria to the Southern kingdom we are again assured that "*mutatis mutandis* Socialism comes to us from Jerusalem."[4] "The Jahvism of the prophets of Judah is essentially a social religion; its object is the reformation of society in accordance with justice."[5] "The Judaism

business, in that very *bourgeois* novel, Ohnet's *Serge Panine*, seems to have been taken straight from this Judaic ideal.

[1] II., pp. 422, 425. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 438. [3] P. 541.
[4] III., p. 2. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

of the eighth century was a theocratic democracy, a religion consisting almost entirely in social questions."[1] "The party that supported this ideal of religious Puritanism was hostile to the secular power *(l'état laïque)*, opposed to military preparations, and would hear of nothing but social and religious reforms."[2] "Jeremiah was much less interested than his predecessors in the social question,"[3] but he certainly contributed his share to its solution if, as the historian bluntly expresses himself, he was "the soul of the fraud" by which Deuteronomy was palmed off on Josiah and the people as the last Tora of Moses[4]; and Deuteronomy was an attempt to put the new ideas into practice, "the programme of a sort of theocratic Socialism, merging the interest of the individual in that of the collective mass."[5] I cannot say whether we are to understand the Levitical law, framed during the Captivity, as a contrast to or a continuation of Deuteronomy, when we find its object stated to be "the happiness of the individual guaranteed by the social group to which he belongs";[6] nor, again, is it easy to see how the Semitic thirst for justice implies egoism,[7] if ignoring the individual was a part of its programme under Josiah; but this is possibly a specimen of the noble daring with which a man of genius sets himself above logic.

It seems, indeed, very hard to study the prophets in a disinterested, historical spirit. For a long

[1] P. 41. [2] P. 96. [3] P. 154. [4] P. 209.
[5] P. 229. The exact words are: "*procédant par la solidarité, ignorant l'individu.*"
[6] P. 427. [7] P. 496.

time exegesis was thoroughly perverted by the attempt to read into them a complete system of Christology, including both the biography of Jesus and the metaphysical doctrines of his followers. Then followed a period, the last days of which some of us can remember, when their pages were ransacked for predictions of a future that never came and never will come, or when the events of modern history were read out of symbols that find their adequate interpretation in reminiscences of the prophet's own experience. It is said that Wilberforce, the anti-slavery statesman, having ascertained to his own satisfaction that the little horn in Daniel meant Bonaparte, rushed into Pitt's cabinet with the exciting intelligence. "Good God, sir," exclaimed the much-tried Minister, "do you call Bonaparte a *little* horn?" More recently, in accordance with that law by which supernatural beliefs become ever more degraded and grotesque as they are abandoned to a lower class of believers, we have witnessed that monstrous product of ignorance, fanaticism, and delirious racial vanity, the derivation of the Anglo-Saxon people from the lost tribes of Israel, presented as the clue to prophetic literature. Scarcely less preposterous, and, considering the scholarship of its author, still more astonishing, is the view that parallels the preaching of righteousness with the utterances of that sinister press which begins with Henri Rochefort and ends with Ravachol. No doubt there are analogies between a chapter of Amos or Isaiah and an anarchist article. Both are short, and both contain violent denunciations of the rich. But while the resemblances go no farther, the

contrasts are nearly inexhaustible. Let us begin with the most obvious, though not the most important. To the journalist the very condition of success is that his paper shall be popular. The prophet, too, had to draw an audience, and, as M. Renan points out, he sometimes attracted it by sufficiently strange methods of self-advertisement. But he depended neither on their plaudits nor on their pence, and therefore, unlike the democratic journalist, he could speak the whole truth, or what seemed to him the truth, without adulteration or reserve. In this respect the Neapolitan capuchin, to whom M. Renan also compares him,[1] occupies an equally independent position; but there is the enormous difference that the capuchin belongs to a vast organisation of immense antiquity. He occupies a place in its hierarchy, and is amenable to his official superiors; he fights for their aggrandisement, and his successes score as points in their game. In a less degree the same remark applies to the revolutionary journalist. He also has an organised party behind him, who shelter him in adversity and give him a share of the spoils when they win. Any day he may be carried into place or power by a wave of popular feeling as Rochefort was in 1870, as he would again have been had General Boulanger triumphed in the elections of 1889.

The great prophets were essentially independent of all such corporate obligations and party ties, and above them. It was the fashion not long ago, and still is in certain quarters, to speak of them as

[1] II., p. 423.

an organised body in the Israelite or Jewish community, actuated by a spirit of jealousy towards the priesthood, and forming a centre of opposition to its claims. All such ideas have been finally dispelled by the great critical discoveries of the last generation, which prove that the priesthood itself as a powerful hereditary corporation did not exist until after the return from Babylon, and was then rather the creation than the opponent of prophetism. Schools of the prophets there undoubtedly were, but they seem to have resembled the dancing dervishes of our own day rather than the great writers to whom we now give the name, and who, indeed, included them in a common denunciation with the corrupt nobles and priests. Speaking for himself, Amos indignantly repudiated all connection with the guild. When Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, bade him "flee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there"—turn an honest penny by lecturing, as we should say—he answered: "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees, and Iahveh took me from following the flock, and Iahveh said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel." In like manner Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel describe themselves as receiving individual, unexpected, and even unwelcome calls. No doubt, like the journalist, the capuchin, the socialist agitator—one may perhaps add the temperance lecturer—they spoke and wrote as the mouthpieces of a cause infinitely higher and greater than themselves. The vital difference was that they bore no party banner, that

they preached no partial reform. They were animated and borne up in death-defying courage and faith by the vital, victorious spirit of Israel as a nation without distinction of class or tribe, and —mounting higher, further still—by the spirit of the world as a whole without distinction of imperial or vassal states.

Hence follows another fundamental contrast. The journalist is almost always, from the nature of his calling, a revolutionist—sometimes of the mild and sleepy type that prefers lying on the left to lying on the right side, or *vice versâ;* sometimes of the violent and furious type that would turn the house upside down; but always a revolutionist in the sense of desiring a transfer of power. We are all unhappily familiar with the method employed for accomplishing this end—a perpetual, microscopic criticism of the words and actions of the office-holders for the time being, varied by corresponding puffery of their rivals, and promises of the great things they will do when their innings comes, and seasoned by appeals to the lowest passions of human nature, to the impulses of destructiveness and greed. Far otherwise was it with the prophets. Like true Orientals, they recognise only one form of government, an absolute monarchy, and their evident wish is that it should be transmitted by hereditary succession. I speak only of the writing prophets, not of those earlier half-legendary seers —Samuel, Ahijah, Elisha—who were always pulling down one king and setting up another. How different was the spirit of Hosea; with what feelings he contemplated the treacherous massacres that accompanied the overthrow of the house of

Omri—massacres evidently condoned or approved by Elisha—may be seen from the name given to his child: "Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu." The experience of two centuries had taught the prophets the uselessness, and worse than uselessness, of merely replacing one dynasty by another; and they were deeply impressed by the tranquillity of Judah under the legitimate sceptre of the house of David. Nor did they believe much in a change of ministry. Only on a single occasion did Isaiah interfere to effect the substitution of one high official for another. Being much displeased with the conduct of a certain Shebna, who was so confident of holding office for his whole lifetime as to begin hewing out a sepulchre for himself, apparently within the precincts of the royal palace, the prophet, speaking in the name of Iahveh, recommended that he should be replaced by Eliakim. M. Renan refers invidiously to this passage as a puffing advertisement (*réclame*) of Eliakim; yet he candidly admits that, if Shebna had not been counterbalanced by Isaiah, Jerusalem under Hezekiah would probably have shared the fate of Samaria. We shall have to consider later the importance of the part played by the prophets as political advisers. We are dealing now with their general attitude towards the community and the state. Here Isaiah's interference on behalf of Eliakim is, as I have said, a solitary exception to the rule they generally observed of leaving the constitution of society as they found it, while inculcating on all classes the same principles of purity, justice, and mercy. To speak of their

ideal as in any sense democratic betrays a thorough confusion of Western with Eastern, of modern with ancient modes of thought and action. Amos and Isaiah had no notion of setting class against class, or of putting themselves at the head of a popular faction to redress the wrongs of the oppressed. M. Renan does indeed fancy that he has discovered the existence of such a faction under Hezekiah, calling themselves the *anavim*, or poor and needy; he quotes long passages from the Psalter, giving expression to their enmities and their griefs;[1] but here, again, we see the danger of ignoring the results of criticism. In the opinion of the best judges the Psalms referred to, so far from belonging to the age of Isaiah, date from a period not less than two hundred, and possibly three or even four hundred years later. Indeed, M. Renan himself, with his usual candour, reminds us that the word *anavim* is never used by Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Nothing can well be imagined more wearisome and profitless than an old newspaper article; in many instances nothing could seem more hollow or insincere. To this rule the articles of an irreconcilable French journalist offer no exception. How artificial is the indignation! How shameless the misrepresentation of facts! How poisonous the misconstruction of motives! The words of the prophets, on the other hand, have continued through all ages as fresh as when they were first uttered, and even now, when we no longer regard them as magical revelations of the unseen

[1] III., pp. 41, 45 *sqq*.

world, they are studied with unabated interest. This is a point on which I need not enlarge, as their claim to a superhuman origin is now most frequently rested on their marvellous power over the conscience and the imagination. They have earned an immortal life because the men who uttered those words rose far above all the petty and partial and transitory antagonisms by which the ingenious French historian would explain their activity.

M. Renan urges that the prophets resemble the radical journalists of our day in the vagueness of their charges and the violence of their declamations.[1] Some of their charges sound distinct enough, and are reproduced with amplifications by himself. "The administration of justice was the greatest curse of the age; false witness was the commonest thing in the world; thus the dominant party held the lives of its adversaries in its hands." Very true; but observe what follows: "The fanatical party (Isaiah and his friends) did not fail to use this means of ridding themselves of their enemies."[2] Not a tittle of evidence is adduced in support of this accusation, which I quote only to show the animus of the writer. On two occasions Jeremiah specifies the grievances of the oppressed poor plainly enough. At a time of utter destitution and imminent danger of complete national ruin, when Pharaoh Necho had stripped the country of its gold and silver, King Jehoiakim found nothing better to do than to build a new palace of the costliest materials and on the largest

[1] II., p. 493. [2] III., p. 124.

scale. He either employed forced labour, or refused to pay his workmen their stipulated wages, thereby bringing down on himself a stern and well-merited rebuke from Jeremiah. It seems incredible, but it is a fact that the effeminate tyrant finds an apologist in the philosophical historian, to whom ruinous luxury seems meritorious as a protest against moral rigour. M. Renan is good enough to admit that "*if* Jehoiakim left his workmen unpaid he was certainly in the wrong," but hastens to add that, "when we find those that now give work to the people habitually spoken of as robbers by the organs of the democracy, we become cautious about putting faith in such allegations."[1] This new method of writing history savours somewhat of reasoning in a circle. First the prophets are likened to radical journalists, and then they are assumed to speak according to the same standards of veracity and good sense. The contrast drawn by Jeremiah between Jehoiakim and his father, the great reformer Josiah, gives his critic occasion for a not very creditable sneer. "Did not thy father," says the prophet, "eat and drink and do judgment and justice? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well." How, it is asked, can Josiah be called happy when he was killed at Megiddo? Strange that a Frenchman of Athenian culture should call any life unhappy that ended with a heroic death on the battlefield.

Despite repeated warnings from Jeremiah, who alone had courage and foresight enough to speak

[1] III., p. 274.

unwelcome truths, Zedekiah revolted against his lawful suzerain, Nebuchadrezzar, and speedily found his capital invested by a Babylonian army. The Jewish king, in his terror, proclaimed the emancipation of all the Hebrew men and women who were at that time held in bondage. It appears that this was no more than the remedy for a grievous wrong, for the year of Jubilee was passed, and by the Deuteronomic law they were entitled to their freedom; which, however, on this occasion seems to have been only granted on condition that they should join in the defence of the city. The decree was obeyed; but soon afterwards Nebuchadrezzar raised the siege, and the freedmen were again reduced to slavery by their former owners. Then the avenging voice of the prophet made itself heard in accents of terrific sarcasm: "Thus saith Iahveh: Ye have not hearkened unto me to proclaim liberty, every man to his brother, and every man to his neighbour; behold I proclaim unto you a liberty, saith Iahveh, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine.....And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant.....when they cut the calf in twain and passed between the parts thereof, the princes of Judah and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land.....I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and.....of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven and to the beasts of the earth" (Jer. xxxiv. 17–20). It is admitted that this time the indignation of the prophet was

[1] III., p. 358.

perfectly justified.[1] Yet one fails to see how, on M. Renan's principles, the whole story is to escape suspicion, or why the breach of faith should not be excused on grounds of State necessity. Meantime I must ask the reader to bear in mind the latter part of the quotation, as it will be referred to in the sequel.

If, however, it could be shown that the prophets were Socialists—if, that is to say, their quarrel was not with the abuses and corruptions, but with the very structure and foundation, of civilisation as they knew it—then, indeed, our estimate of their trustworthiness, of their ethical value, and of their historical importance would be seriously affected. More than this, we should have to frame a new philosophy of history, race, and religion—a philosophy that would claim for Judæa, for the Semites, for monotheism, what has hitherto been claimed for republican Athens and Rome, for the Aryans, for free Hellenic speculation. So great a change in opinion could be justified only by the strongest arguments. But M. Renan, after his manner, produces no arguments at all—gives us nothing more than repeated assertions. If he should live to write the history of Greece, we may expect to find him making assertions of a directly opposite tendency, which will then have the advantage of being true. For we are in a position to show that the prophets were not Socialists in any sense of the word; that Socialism had never dawned on their horizon; that it was, on the contrary, a creation of the Greek genius, and an outgrowth of democratic institutions.

Socialism is now generally understood to mean the abolition or restriction of private property, in

order to the more equal diffusion of wealth and happiness through the entire community.[1] The question whether such an arrangement is practicable or desirable need not delay us here. The important thing is that we should distinguish it from all legislation directed towards the protection of the poor against the fraud or violence of the rich, and against administrative oppression, as well as from all exhortations to private charity. A very little consideration will enable us to perceive that Socialism, so understood, can be developed only at a late stage of civilisation. Property must have come to be clearly distinguished from its owners—not such an easy process as some may imagine; attention must have been called to the moral evils arising out of its appropriation by a few, a high ideal of disinterestedness must have been framed, if it is hoped that the rich will voluntarily surrender a part of their superfluities; or a high degree of concerted action must have become possible among the poor if it is expected that they will possess themselves by force of what is wanting to them. By a still harder effort of abstraction, men must have learned to distinguish the community as a whole from its component members, and they must have had long experience of a centralised administration successfully managing the affairs of the nation, before they feel disposed to trust it with the office of regulating industry and distributing its fruits where they are needed. Only in the centres of Western civilisation has such an elaboration of ideas ever been possible. An equally important

[1] Written in 1892. The word most generally used now is "Collectivism."

consideration is that entertainment of them implies a transformation of theological beliefs wholly inconsistent with Eastern habits of thought. Men must have convinced themselves that the social organism is a machine that they have created for themselves, and can alter at their own discretion, rather than a divine creation to be altered only at the good pleasure of God. The more primitive faith has hopes of its own, but they are not hopes that take the direction of Socialism. God can create wealth to any extent; therefore he can supply the wants of the poor without depriving the rich of their property. According to the Messianic visions of the prophets, this is exactly what he will do at last. Meantime they invoke his retributive justice to punish the rich for depriving the poor of *their* property. For there comes a period in the history of every community when this worst of all iniquities is habitually perpetrated—when the suppression of it is the one engrossing problem of human thought. On the diverging methods adopted for its solution the future courses of theology and politics once depended.

The pinch of poverty makes itself felt at an early stage of social progress. But the remedy first tried is the occupation of more fertile land—a process generally accompanied by the destruction or enslavement of its previous possessors. When the simultaneous expansion and mutual pressure of the various tribes has restricted each within certain limits, government and religion become organised. Kings and gods are then looked on as a refuge for the distressed, and are freely exchanged for others when they fail to give satisfaction. After a time

the notion of law becomes dissociated from its human enactors, and is placed under the guardianship of superhuman beings, who are credited with the origination of this as of every other institution. The divine power, being plastic to reason, is thought of as perfectly just; while sad experience shows that human powers are too often the contrary. When the military class has become differentiated from the industrial class, and governmental functions are monopolised by the former, their increased authority is pretty sure to be exercised for their own profit, and the more so as the king, whose weight is ordinarily thrown on the side of the people, sees himself overshadowed or reduced to a puppet by the nobility, and his jurisdiction set at naught by their lawless violence. As appeals were formerly carried against the chiefs to the king, so they are now carried against both to the gods, or to God conceived as the supreme ruler of the world. Such was the stage of social evolution, and such also the moment of reflection reached almost simultaneously by Hesiod in Bœotia and by the older prophets in Samaria and Jerusalem. There was this difference, however: that, as the shadows of actual iniquity were probably much darker in Palestine, the splendours of idealised and personified justice were there more intense, the vision of impending retribution more imminent and appalling than in Hellas. But in both alike oppression seemed the one great evil; and no more appeared to be needed to make men happy than that every one should possess what his fathers had left him, and be permitted to reap the fruits of his labour in peace.

After this the paths of the two races rapidly diverge. In the elegies of Solon we find much the same story of social antagonism as in Amos, with the same protests against the rapacity of the rich. Solon's touching lamentations over the Athenian citizens who were sold away from their homes vividly recall the organised white slave trade between Israel and Tyre.[1] But the remedies adopted differed as widely as the European differs from the Asiatic character. Solon passed an ordinance relieving the oppressed debtors from a considerable portion of their liabilities; and, by giving the people a large share in the government, he guaranteed them against injustice for the future. So much for M. Renan's assertion that "social questions were severely eliminated in the Greek city-state."[2] Had such been the case, Greece could not have "furnished the complete model of a civilised society."[3] It might more reasonably be maintained that in Greece the social question took precedence of every other. The whole object of a Greek democracy was first to secure the poorer classes against oppression, and then to provide for them a larger share of material advantages. In Athens not only was the principal weight of necessary taxation thrown on the rich, but at last, under the pretence of payment for the performance of public functions, the poor were subsidised out of the exchequer and supplied with amusements free of charge, besides being frequently settled as colonists on conquered territory. Complete Communism was the logical outcome of such tendencies; and

[1] II., p. 427. [2] III., p. 43. [3] *Ibid*, p. 91.

accordingly we find Communism ironically suggested by Aristophanes, and most seriously adopted by Plato as part of a comprehensive scheme for the reformation of society.[1] Religion was also the subject of Plato's most anxious consideration—a fact which M. Renan must have forgotten when he rashly declared that "social and religious questions escaped the infantile serenity" of the Greek mind. Neither is it true that no protest against slavery came from Greece.[2] On the contrary, we know, by the evidence of Aristotle, that certain Greek philosophers said what no Hebrew prophet had said before them, what no Christian apostle said after them: Slavery is wrong, because all men are naturally free. If we cannot so peremptorily answer the allegation that "Greece did not, among her other great achievements, create humanitarianism; she despised the barbarians too much for that,"[3] it is simply because the evidence in her favour, if adequately presented, would fill a volume. Here I need only observe that the Greek contempt for barbarians opposed no insuperable obstacle to their admission into the ranks of Hellenism; for, according to Isocrates, what made a Hellene was not race, but education. Our own use of the word

[1] I am aware that in the *Republic* Communism is limited to the guardians of the State, who are necessarily but a small minority of the citizens; but in the *Laws*, while recognising private property as the only practicable arrangement in the actual condition of civilisation, Plato pronounces Communism in the most absolute sense to be the ideally best constitution. And Plato's scheme is always criticised by Aristotle in reference to its universal applicability.

[2] III., p. 91. I am not quite sure whether Renan's words imply as much. In form they are limited to the Homeric age.

[3] *Ibid*, p. 504. *Cf.* the first Essay in this volume.

"barbarous," as synonymous with inhuman, shows how we identify the opposite of barbarism, which is Hellenism, with humanity itself.

The history of the social question in Rome runs for a time much the same course as in Athens. There is at first the same oppression of the poor by the rich,[1] the same redress of grievances through the instrumentality of political institutions, and subsequently the same wholesale maintenance of the necessitous classes at the public expense, the chief difference being that what was done by a democratic assembly in the one State was done by a democratic despot in the other.

Far different was the method followed in Judæa. There the prophets sought for salvation by purifying the Iahveh religion from every vestige of polytheism and idolatry, from every intermixture with the cruel and licentious orgies of Syrian superstition. M. Renan does full justice to the enlightened, beneficent, and progressive character of the war waged against heathenism by the noblest spirits of Israel.[2] "In no Greek city," he observes, "was the struggle against idolatry and against selfish priestly interests carried on with such originality as at Jerusalem." At the same time, it should be remembered that nowhere in Greece were those evils so rampant or so noxious. However this may be, the share taken by Jeremiah in the great conflict of the higher against the lower forms of religion might, one would think, have saved him from the outrage of being compared, at

[1] This remains true of the age of the Gracchi, whatever we may think of the stories told in Livy and accepted by Niebuhr.

[2] III., pp. 180–81.

least for one side of his character, to an implacable Jesuit.[1] But the experience of the *boulevardier*, and indeed of most modern Frenchmen, stands so far from the prophetic spirit that any attempt to illustrate the one from the other must be hopelessly misleading.

Monotheism in the abstract is, as F. D. Maurice observed, a mere negation, and not more refreshing than any other negation. The first commandment of the Decalogue, in Clough's cynical version, is a particularly easy one to obey :—

> Thou shalt have one God only; who
> Would be at the expense of two?

The real value of monotheism lies in its relation to ethics. Unity of person and power implies unity of will. A plurality of gods may pull different ways, what is a virtue to the one being a vice to the other. This, as Mr. Shadworth Hodgson has well observed, gives peculiar interest to the Hippolytus of Euripides, where the hero is punished by Aphrodite for his obedience to Artemis. A single supreme ruler can have only one law—a law which tends to uphold the order that he has created, and which, so far, must make for righteousness. The Creator of the universe is also conceived as omnipotent, and therefore able to enforce his decrees by irresistible sanctions. Thus to the prophets every calamity that befell their own people, or the world in general, was a punishment for sin. Nor is this all. Monotheism promotes, as no other religion can, the idea of a common humanity, or at least of a common nationality, with its accompanying obligations of mutual kindness and mercy.

[1] III., p. 350.

Among the Greeks Zeus was looked on as the god of suppliants and fugitives. The Iahveh worship supplied a common ground where rich and poor could meet. The foreign cults introduced from Damascus or Assyria, the revivals of Canaanite heathenism, or the survivals of ancestor-worship in old Israelite families, would have no such reconciling influence. It is not to be supposed for a moment that this association between the religion of Iahveh and the practice of righteousness was the result of any conscious reasoning in the minds of the prophets or of their disciples. They preached what we call monotheism, not because it was beneficent, but because it was true, and because its observance was imposed on Israel by the strongest obligations of gratitude for the great deliverance from Egypt.[1] But a connection was established by the logic of feeling, more potent than the logic of thought, when he who loved Iahveh with his whole heart was drawn through that high affection to love his neighbour as himself.

In all this there was nothing, and could be nothing, that we call socialistic. To an Israelite thinker the institution of property must have seemed a primordial ordinance of God, and so also must the inequality of its distribution among men. In fact, what the prophets condemn is not wealth, but wealth procured by violence or fraud. The Deuteronomic legislation is generally admitted to have been compiled under prophetic influence, however alien its ritualistic prescriptions may have

[1] I am not assuming that the Exodus was historical, but only that it was believed to be historical when the great prophets wrote.

been to the spirit at least of Jeremiah. Deuteronomy assumes at every step the existence of private property and the distinction between rich and poor, and virtually sets on them the seal of divine approbation. M. Renan, as we have seen, has the hardihood to call it the programme of a sort of theocratic Socialism; but we need not go beyond his own pages for a contradictory instance. He refers with approval to the commandment bidding the employer pay the hired labourer his wages before sunset, "for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it."[1] Evidently the Judaic working man had no thought of abolishing the capitalist, or of claiming a share in the profits exactly equal to the amount of wealth created by his labour; he was only too thankful if his small wages were punctually paid. Nor did the Deuteronomist foresee any termination to this state of things. "The poor," he tells his hearers, "shall never cease out of the land" (xv. 11); and, accordingly, sundry provisions are made for relieving their wants—provisions which few would call socialistic, even if they were enforced by the authority of the State, whereas in this instance they were more probably rules laid down for the guidance of private charity. Had there been any germ of Socialism in Deuteronomy, we should expect to find it still further developed in the Priestly Code. Such, however, is not the case. The Levitical legislator sanctions private property to the full extent of permitting it to be inherited; he regulates sacrifices according to the means of the person offering them; he allows

[1] Deut. xxiv. 14, 15; Renan, III., p. 230.

the very poor to sell themselves to the rich, provided they are not kept in perpetual bondage; and, reviving a very ancient recommendation, he bids the judges "not respect the person of the poor" any more than they are to "honour the person of the mighty"—a clear proof that the poor were not to be released from the duty of fulfilling their legal obligations (Lev. xix. 15). The section containing this passage is supposed to date from the time of Ezekiel, or not much later, and therefore ought to show more immediate traces of prophetic influence than the rest of the Priestly Code. In the oldest collection of laws the rule runs: "Neither shalt thou favour a poor man in his cause" (Exod. xxiii. 3). The Deuteronomist omits it, possibly because in his time there was no danger of any such partiality.[1]

That a learned, acute, and candid historian should pervert, or at least miscall, patent facts to such an extent is a phenomenon demanding some explanation. One cause of M. Renan's aberrations is, as I have already said, his growing appetite for popularity. Maurice spoke of the *Vie de Jésus* as a translation of the language of the Gospel into the language of the boudoir. We have it now supplemented by a translation of the language of the prophets into the language of the boulevard. But other causes have also been at

[1] It is a curious instance of learned ignorance that Emmanuel Deutsch, the great rabbinical scholar, should have credited the Talmud with the subtle observation that judges are liable to be prejudiced in favour of the poor. Readers of Charles Reade's novel, *A Simpleton,* will remember how a London magistrate, taken from the life, will not listen to a charge of theft against a servant-girl, though supported by the clearest evidence.

work to bias the judgment of the eminent writer. Regarding as he does, with perfect correctness, the ethical teaching of Jesus as springing directly from the teaching of the older prophets; and regarding as he does, with less correctness, primitive Christianity as Socialism put into practice, he naturally looks for a germ of the later in the earlier morality, and, looking for it, he finds it.

But it is by no means certain that the early Christians had their goods in common, or condemned the possession of wealth. No such idea is to be found in the writings of our earliest contemporary authority, St. Paul; in the oldest Gospel, that of Mark, it only appears on a single occasion —the story of the young man seeking salvation; while the third Gospel and the Acts, in which it becomes prominent, are considered by good authorities to be idealising works of later date. Granting, however, that the early Church was communistic, we have to ask under what inspiration the tendency arose; and the answer at once suggests itself that here, as in other points, the influence of Essenism is apparent. Now, Zeller has, with great plausibility, traced the Communism of the Essenes, as well as some other practices of theirs, to a Pythagorean—that is to say, to a Greek—source.[1] And, although frequently disputed, this derivation has been recently fortified by the adhesion of no less a scholar than Professor Schürer.[2] Thus the Socialism of Christianity, questionable enough in itself, affords no ground

[1] Zeller, *Philosophie der Griechen*, V., pp. 325 *sqq.* (3rd ed.).

[2] *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*, II., pp. 491 *sq.* (2nd ed.).

for ascribing any such doctrine to the prophets of Israel.

Perhaps another and still stronger consideration operated to suggest to M. Renan what seems so utterly mistaken an interpretation of Hebrew prophecy. It may have seemed to him that the demand for justice so powerfully expressed by Amos, and, in a less degree, by the prophets of Jerusalem, necessarily carried with it a condemnation of the existing system of property, with its resulting inequalities of material happiness. We do hear it sometimes urged that for one man to be rich and another poor, when the former works no harder than the latter, or, as frequently happens, does not work at all, is unjust on the face of it. Again, it is urged that it is unjust to pay the labourer less than the exact pecuniary equivalent of the wealth he creates, or to ask interest for a loan. Such arguments may be good or bad; I have no wish to enter into a discussion of their validity. As a matter of fact, very few Individualists would accept them. Certainly the chief philosophical representative of Individualism, Herbert Spencer, far from admitting the abstract justice of Socialism, would call it the negation of justice. But on this point M. Renan occupies a very peculiar, perhaps I may say a unique, position. He evidently looks on Socialism as being at one and the same time perfectly just, perfectly humane, and perfectly inexpedient. Such a paradox is quite in keeping with his general philosophy, if we can dignify with that name his cheerfully ironical way of looking at things. The world, he has told us elsewhere, is essentially unjust *(l'injustice même)*,

and the thought does not seem to cause him much distress. Perhaps it will be set right some day; perhaps not. Meantime the brilliant intellectual culture, the decorative adjuncts, the charm of high-bred manners that make life worth living for him, are rooted in social inequalities. But Socialism also has its æsthetic side, and appeals to romantic imaginations. Thus through his very culture he can admire while he condemns the fanatics who would replace it by a measured and monotonous happiness.

Fortunately, we are relieved from entering into a discussion of this alleged antinomy between justice and civilisation; for to the prophets, at any rate, justice did not mean the equalisation of social conditions. It meant that every one should continue to possess his own in peace, his own being what law and custom entitled him to. It seemed no hardship to Nathan that one citizen should have exceeding many flocks and herds, and another only one ewe-lamb; the injustice began when the rich man robbed his poor neighbour of that solitary possession. Elijah did not propose to nationalise Ahab's ivory house, but only that the royal family should not seize Naboth's vineyard, and do its owner to death through the agency of perjured witnesses. Jeremiah would not have grudged Jehoiakim the pleasure of a new palace if he had paid the masons and carpenters for building it. However strange it may seem to the present generation, the prophets, and indeed all good Israelites, held that to keep one's word was an essential element of justice, or rather its very foundation. To the Psalmist the man who "walks

uprightly and works righteousness" is also the man who "swears to his own hurt and changes not." Let me add that he does not take usury; but on this point Aristotle, the great anti-Socialist thinker, would have professed the same opinion. Looking back now to Jeremiah's denunciation of the faithless nobles who re-enslaved their emancipated bondsmen, we are able to appreciate the full significance of their crime. They had broken a contract made according to the most ancient Semitic custom, by cutting the sacrificial victims in two, arranging them in parallel rows, and walking between the severed halves. This was called "cutting a covenant," and the parties so pledged invoked on themselves the fate of the slaughtered and divided animals should they be faithless to their contract. Next to kinship, this was the firmést bond of moral obligation between man and man, and eventually it seems to have assumed a higher sanctity even than the ties of blood; for, while all other duties were placed under the sanction of religion, the binding force of religion itself rested on the duty of fulfilling the covenant made on Sinai between Israel and Iahveh.

Emerson has finely observed that it is the privilege of the intellect to carry every fact to successive platforms. The things of the intellect have no more distinguished living representative than M. Renan.[1] Let us, then, grant him this privilege to its utmost extent. Let us not take it amiss if he smiles with tolerant, good-humoured irony at our attempts to tie him down pedantically

[1] Written in 1892.

to the accepted meanings of words; if he attributes our excessive logical punctiliousness to a lingering strain of the Puritanism that we profess to have disregarded in theology. A Socialist, he may observe, is not necessarily a Communist, with a cut-and-dried scheme for handing over land and capital to the State; nor did he ever represent the prophets as so many Fouriers and St. Simons. It is enough that they give a somewhat disproportionate share of their attentions to the sufferings of the poor, and that the earlier prophets at least treat religion and government mainly as instruments for redressing the wrongs of the oppressed, to the neglect or disparagement of other, perhaps more important, considerations, such as the national defences, the adornment of life, and the study of pure truth. By this concentration on a single class of interests, and by the violence of their language, they differ from the Greeks, while to the same extent they resemble the modern irreconcilable journalist. Agreeing to use the word "Socialism" in this extended sense, I must still demur to the application. For what we call the social question did not even exist for the prophets. What they demanded was the enforcement of the ordinary criminal law, the expediency of which is no longer a question, except perhaps among the irreconcilable journalists. The rest of us, at any rate, hold it to be the first condition of existence to a civilised community, and it is fairly well fulfilled by the modern State. Such brigandage as the prophets describe, if practised at all now, is practised by members of the poorer classes. But experience shows that social order, ever so well maintained,

leaves an enormous mass of human misery untouched ; the problem how to get rid of this misery is precisely what we call the social question. That it should be asked at all presupposes a rather high standard of morality; it assumes that the well-to-do classes are seriously interested in the welfare of their less fortunate fellow-citizens. But neither morality nor religion will tell us how to solve it, any more than they can tell us how best to reform the Government, or to organise the national defences. Rather must social organisation help morality, if it be true, as some insist, that our present commercial system makes honesty impossible. In other words, the problem is not moral, but intellectual, because the question is not one of ends, but of means. All admit that the welfare of the masses is supremely desirable ; what inquirers differ about is the way in which to set to work in order to obtain it. The Socialist has one scheme, the Individualist another ; the party politician says that he has more pressing business to look after. The Hebrew prophet, could we consult him, would tell us to be very good and religious, and Iahveh would make everybody happy. He saw the end, but not the means.

Thus, if we cannot say, with M. Renan, that the abuses denounced by the prophets are social necessities,. neither can we say, with M. James Darmesteter, that their teaching, reinforced by modern science, suffices to meet our present needs. In the first place, the simple injunction of morality, even when backed up by any amount of supernatural terrors and hopes, seems scarcely enough to make men good ; and, in the second place, even

if men were all individually to become good, the working of the whole industrial machine as at present arranged would not necessarily become beneficent in its operation. We must either come to recognise a large residue of misery as inevitably resulting from the constitution of things in themselves, or we must devise a scheme for getting rid of it by some great concerted series of associated actions. In either case it will be the tradition of Greek philosophy, not of Hebrew prophecy, that we shall continue. Philosophy teaches us to understand the eternal concatenation of causes and effects, and this leads to resignation; or to practise the successful adaptation of means to ends, and this brings about reform.

The prophetic view of life was what the Germans call "unvermittelt"—unmediated—or, to use a barbarous but expressive word, unmachined; and the void the prophets left was destined to be fatally supplied, first by the priests, and afterwards by the Scribes and Pharisees. But as a moral programme it was complete. No one virtue is favoured at the expense of the rest. Recent critics have dwelt, with excessive emphasis, on their inculcation of justice and mercy; but the prophets give quite as much prominence to truthfulness, temperance, and purity. If we do not find exhortations to courage and patriotism, the reason is that these virtues could take care of themselves. Like all the other Semites, the Hebrews were ready to fight for their country to the last drop of their blood; the duty of wise counsellors was rather to restrain than to urge them on.

We pass to the charge most often brought or

insinuated by M. Renan against the prophets, that they were bad citizens—factious fanatics, who habitually obstructed the Government in providing for the national defence. Let us remember what was the position of Judæa during the last century and a half of her existence as a kingdom. She was for the whole of that period, with one brief interval of subjection to Egypt, a vassal State of the great Mesopotamian monarchy, under the headship first of Nineveh, and afterwards of Babylon. She owed this position to the pusillanimity of Ahaz, who, contrary to the advice of Isaiah, had sought the protection of Tiglath-pileser against the combined forces of Israel and Damascus, consenting in return to become his tributary. The yoke thus voluntarily assumed seems to have been very galling—at least to the Judæan nobles, who were constantly endeavouring to shake it off. As Judah was evidently far too weak to resist Assyria single-handed, their invariable policy was to call in the help of Egypt. This step was resolutely opposed by the prophets, who well knew into what a decrepit condition the once formidable monarchy of the Nile had fallen, and how untrustworthy were any promises from that quarter. We may well believe also that, subjection for subjection, they preferred the rule of their ancient kinsfolk on the Euphrates to that of their ancient taskmasters in the Delta. At any rate, their advice was eminently judicious, and it even extorts the reluctant approval of M. Renan, who allows that, "on the whole, Isaiah was right, notwithstanding the strangeness of his arguments. Egypt was not a solid support."[1]

[1] III., p. 14.

But Isaiah was no advocate of peace at any price. When Sennacherib insolently, and it would seem in defiance of sworn treaties, demanded the surrender of Jerusalem, and when the hearts of her defenders were failing, the prophet at that decisive moment confronted the emissaries of the great conqueror with a defiance still haughtier than their own, and saved the future of religion by his timely assurance. Here, again, M. Renan admits that "the conduct of Isaiah seems to have been most correct."[1] On another occasion, when Baladan, king of Babylon, sought to draw Hezekiah into a compromising alliance, the prophet is said to have uttered a significant warning of the danger involved in such a scheme; and once more his policy is coldly commended by the historian.[2]

The part imposed on Jeremiah a hundred years later differed in some essential respects from that played by his great predecessor. He had not to rouse the nobles of Judæa from a state of careless frivolity or of mournful apathy, but rather to discountenance their overweening confidence and spasmodic energy. It would seem that the Iahvistic movement, with its accompanying conception of Zion as the chosen dwelling-place, the holy and inviolable temple of Judah's God, had already taken such a hold on men's imaginations as to inspire them with a belief in its impregnability to attack. On the other hand, the overlord of Palestine was no mere conqueror, no blind destroyer like Sennacherib, but probably the greatest and wisest ruler that the East has yet seen. Nebuchadrezzar

[1] III., p. 107.

[2] "Isaïe fut encore inspiré par un politique assez sage" (p. 118).

united distinguished military abilities to an equal eminence in the arts of peace; all that later generations attributed to the mythical Semiramis was really done by him. For an Oriental despot he showed exceptional clemency, or at least exceptional moderation. M. Renan, indeed, says that the chief men of Judah were scalped after the fashion of Red Indians in the presence of Nebuchadrezzar before they were put to death at Riblah.[1] The Biblical narrative gives no support to this assertion. The only evidence adduced in its favour is a figured representation on an Assyrian bas-relief—as if the Babylonians had the same customs as their savage northern neighbours![2] There is every reason to believe that Nebuchadrezzar wished to leave Jerusalem standing as an ornament and bulwark of his empire. In such circumstances the repeated attempts of her nobility and priesthood to shake off the Babylonian yoke were sheer madness, closely akin to the revolt of the Zealots against Rome long afterwards; their faith in divine assistance was inspired by the same obdurate fanaticism.

Jeremiah, alike by his counsels of submission and by his proclamation of a purely spiritual religion independent of sanctuaries and priesthoods, showed himself the true predecessor—more than that, the master and model—of Jesus. Yet M. Renan is so misled by false modern analogies that in this sober, sagacious, far-sighted prophet he can see nothing better than a howling fanatic, half a Félix Pyat, half an implacable Jesuit—a monkish

[1] III., p. 365.

[2] For a juster appreciation of the great Chaldæan king see Eduard Meyer's admirable *Geschichte des Altherthums.*

soul without an idea of military honour. In order to understand him, we are told to imagine a French political writer in July, 1870, calling the Prussians the ministers of God.[1] The letters that passed between the Jewish captives in Babylonia and the remnant left in Jerusalem are compared with what we may suppose the correspondence between the transported Communists in New Caledonia and their friends in Paris after 1871 to have been.[2] Most probably the letters from a Parisian Socialist to his more unlucky fellow-conspirators beyond the sea were filled with hopes of a fresh revolution, of a speedy and triumphant return to France, of signal vengeance on the bloody Versaillese. There were, indeed, some among the captive Jews who cherished such hopes of deliverance, and there were some among the priests and prophets of Jerusalem who encouraged them. These, however, were the bitter enemies of Jeremiah, and nothing incensed them more than the true prophet's advice to settle down quietly in their new country, building houses and planting gardens, as they and their posterity were to live there for seventy years, but, above all, to behave as law-abiding citizens. Consulted by Zedekiah, during the final siege, about the best course to pursue, Jeremiah advised, what was in fact the only rational plan, immediate surrender; as if, says M. Renan, military honour was nothing! The historian ought to know that honour in our sense was then undiscovered, and that even now honour does not require that an untenable position should be held at the risk of utter destruction.

[1] III., p. 289. [2] *Ibid*, p. 319.

Zedekiah's motive was really not honour of any kind, but moral cowardice—the fear of being ridiculed by the Jews who had already gone over to Nebuchadrezzar. After all, M. Renan honestly admits that "Jeremiah's fierce declamations, had they been listened to, would have prevented frightful massacres";[1] but his supposed case of a Frenchman foreseeing and announcing the disaster of 1870 is not an instructive parallel. France was no weak vassal State, bound by solemn engagements to pay tribute to the king of Prussia, but an independent Power, and, as many thought, fully the equal of Germany in military strength; nor was there any danger that Paris, in the event of capture, would incur the fate of Jerusalem.

To represent Jeremiah as a religious enthusiast, opposed to the lay element, the military and political leaders of the Jewish State, is an entirely mistaken view. No such distinction then existed, for the simple reason that all parties were imbued with religious ideas; the only difference was in the relative purity and enlightenment of the faith held. The party of resistance *à outrance* was represented not merely by selfish and treacherous oppressors of the poor, but by prophets who vehemently predicted that the foreign yoke would be broken and the sacred vessels brought back from Babylon within a year, by priests who kept shouting that Iahveh would not permit his temple to be destroyed. In answer to their chimerical expectations of divine assistance, Jeremiah was obliged to keep on repeating that a people so plunged in immorality and

[1] III., p. 333.

superstition would deservedly be abandoned to the doom their own folly had incurred. But he was not, as seems to be popularly supposed, a mere prophet of evil. Taking up and giving a still higher development to Isaiah's great idea of the Remnant that was to be saved, he trusted—as the event proved, with perfect correctness—to the purifying influences of exile for the filtering out of a new people that had been "poured from vessel to vessel," not "left standing on his own lees" like Moab, whose "taste remaineth in him and his scent is not changed." Thanks to those prophets whom we are now asked to look on as a subversive and dissolving force, working only for individual happiness and indifferent to great public interests, Israel again became a united and heroic nation when the ruin which they foretold had already long overtaken Edom and Moab, Philistia, Tyre, and Damascus—if by ruin we may understand the forfeiture of their political existence. To say that "the Hebrew thinker, like the modern Nihilist, holds that if the world cannot be just it had better not be at all,"[1] presents an unmeaning alternative. The Hebrew thinker held that justice was the foundation of all stable existence; that when the divinely commissioned forces, ever operating for the destruction of iniquity, had done their work of denudation, an everlasting core of righteousness would remain to be the centre of a new world of life and light and joy.

One more charge remains to be noticed. It is said that the victory of the pietists under Josiah

[1] II., p. 438.

was followed by a literary decline ; that no more such works as the Song of Solomon, Job, and Proverbs were produced.[1] Here, too, we see the fatal effect of ignoring the results of modern criticism. There is a growing consensus of opinion in favour of placing Job and Proverbs long after Jeremiah ; and more than one critic would assign as late a date to the Song of Solomon. In fact, we have to thank the monotheistic movement for a great literary revival succeeding to a century of almost utter sterility. No nation could have gone on for ever producing such wonderful works as the old heroic and patriarchal legends, the cycle of prophetic narratives, and the earliest written prophecies. An age of reflection could do nothing better than give us what the perfected Iahveh religion actually gave, the visions of Ezekiel, the nameless voices of the Exile and the Return, the Psalter, and—*pace* M. Renan—the Book of Job.

This, then, is the result of our inquiry. The prophets no more anticipated the problems of modern society than they predicted the events of modern history ; but if we desire a fitting modern parallel to their spirit and influence, it must be sought among the wisest, calmest, and best balanced, rather than among the flightiest and most feverish heads of our time. Balance and harmony are, in truth, the most pervasive characteristics of their teaching, by whatever tests it is tried, with whatever order of interests it has to deal. In the existing remains of their discourses the directly anti-social actions are not more severely

[1] III., p. 250.

condemned than the vices whose deleterious operation is less obvious and immediate. The rights of the poor are vindicated, but without prejudice to other rights on which the future of civilisation depended. There is nothing in the religion of the prophets that the purest morality can condemn; there is nothing in their morality that the most prudent or patriotic statesman need ignore. They wrote both for an age and for all time, using the utmost exaltation of imaginative sublimity, the keenest arrows of sarcasm, the tenderest entreaties of wounded yet unconquerable affection, and the most concentrated energies of language as an embodiment and expression of the highest spiritual verities then attained. No minds were ever, in T. H. Green's sense, more truly organic to the eternal consciousness. None ever placed the divine so far above the human, but none ever wrought more surely for the reunion and recognition of both as interdependent elements of a single absolute existence.

THE HIGHER CRITICISM AND THE SUPERNATURAL

THEOLOGICAL orthodoxy, even orthodoxy of the most rigid type—the orthodoxy of the Roman Catholic Church—has made its peace with physical science. The nebular hypothesis, the antiquity of the earth, the antiquity of man, the development of our race by natural selection from purely animal ancestors, the intimate connection between psychic and nervous processes—whatever, in short, we sum up under the convenient name of evolution—may be accepted and taught without prejudice to the religious belief, whose very foundations such theories were but lately supposed to threaten. A cynic might observe that, if it takes two to make a quarrel, it also takes two to make peace, and that, so far, science has received the overtures of her old enemy very much as the overtures of Darius after the battle of Issus were received by Alexander. Let us assume, however, that the conflict is at an end, or that the abandonment of a few indefensible outworks has left the ecclesiastical citadel more secure than ever against assault. Still, the conflict, so happily concluded, may not be without its warnings. Was it not, to say the least, ill-advised on the part of theology to provoke such a conflict at all, and still more so to stake her very existence on points as to which, by her own admission, she was quite in the wrong? Is the present moment a

well-chosen one for renewing the conflict in another quarter, with at least an appreciable chance of seeing it terminated by another humiliating surrender?

These are questions that answer themselves; yet, from the tone habitually employed by the accredited defenders of orthodoxy in reference to what is called the Higher Criticism, one would imagine that they had never been asked. With some honourable exceptions, it is a tone marked by the same curious mixture of fear, contempt, ridicule, and ignorance that characterised the official denunciations of Darwinism in the last generation, and of geology in the generation before the last. To make the parallel more complete, just as certain timid or jealous or retrograde specialists were acclaimed by the religious and conservative press as the only genuine or authoritative representatives of physical science, so in our own time scholars who uphold the traditional opinions are habitually spoken of by the same press as if they had a monopoly of learning, honesty, and good sense.

But among the controversial devices most freely used to discredit the results of the Higher Criticism there is one not paralleled in the old warfare against advanced physical science. While no one with any pretensions to culture ever supposed that Laplace, Lyell, Darwin, Helmholtz, Claude Bernard, and Berthelot constructed their scientific theories in a spirit of hatred to natural religion, and in order to dispense with the necessity of a Creator and an immortal soul, it is assumed, not only by the vulgar ruck of apologists, but also by many among the most learned and highly-placed teachers of official orthodoxy, that men like Baur and Renan

Kuenen and Wellhausen, have spent their lives in the study of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures only that they might destroy the documentary evidence of revealed religion, although from their point of view the disproof was wholly unnecessary. For these critics, it is said, start with a conviction, based entirely on *à priori* reasoning, that the supernatural does not exist, or cannot be known. Divine omnipotence never intervenes to change the course of nature; divine omniscience never discloses the secrets of futurity to man. So, when the exercise of such miraculous powers is authenticated by historical evidence that would be enough to satisfy the most exacting in the case of any ordinary event, the evidence is rejected as insufficient, or as anonymous, or as of late date, or even as a deliberate fabrication. The most arbitrary hypotheses are put forward to explain how the narratives came into existence, while the documents embodying them are taken away from their reputed authors and assigned in part or wholly to late dates, with no other warrant than the individual caprice of the critic. As fast as one such hypothesis is refuted, another succeeds it, and is proclaimed with equal confidence. Their production is limited only by the ingenuity of unbelief, which, however, exhausts itself in vain efforts to undermine the "impregnable rock" of traditional faith.

Such is the uniform reply made to the Higher Criticism by all its assailants, lay and clerical, Catholic and Protestant. One and the same note sounds through the grave and guarded admonitions of Leo XIII., the smug insular self-satisfaction of Bishop Ellicott, the mild jocularity of Dr. Salmon,

the truculent misrepresentations of Dr. Wace, the tortuous evasions of Mr. Gladstone, the supercilious man-of-the-worldism of Mr. Arthur Balfour, and, I am sorry to add, through the efforts, only too successful, of the dying naturalist, Romanes, to sophisticate away his own scientific conscience. Grant, they contend, the credibility of the supernatural, and the Higher Criticism is ruined, the credibility of the Biblical narratives restored.

One must wonder at the moderation with which so irresistible a weapon has been employed. It might be wielded with equal effect in other fields than that of Biblical criticism. Was not the acceptance of evolution a little hasty? Let us see whether the ground abandoned to physical science may not yet be regained.

The nebular hypothesis, as originally framed by Kant and Laplace, is now, I believe, universally abandoned. A spherical body, containing the same amount of matter as our solar system, and filling up the orbit of Neptune, could not revolve on its own axis nor throw off those successive rings out of which the planets were once supposed to be formed. Indeed, the so-called ring of Saturn, which first suggested the hypothesis, is now known not to be a ring at all, but a collection of minute satellites. Nevertheless, astronomers continue to hold a nebular hypothesis of some sort —that is, they believe that the stars and planets were originally formed by the aggregation of smaller bodies. Here, then, is an excellent opportunity for the theologian to intervene and to taunt the physicist with having recourse to the most desperate shifts in order that he may escape from

the unpalatable alternative of admitting that the celestial orbs, as we now behold them, were the work of a Divine Hand, which, in the poet's words, "bowled them flaming through the dark abyss."

Turn we now to geology. It is no secret that the authorities on that science are at sixes and sevens with regard to the antiquity of the globe, its actual consistency, and the nature of the forces by which its crust was shaped. But all are agreed in assuming that its age must be counted by millions of years, and that during the whole of that immense period none but material agencies, such as fire, air, water, and ice, have been at work beneath or above its surface. Here, again, there seems to be an admirable opportunity for our orthodox friends to come to the rescue. I can imagine them exclaiming: "You are struggling with difficulties of your own creation; accept the miraculous, and they will disappear by enchantment. Only prejudice forbids you to believe that God made the world in six days. The story of the Deluge is perfectly in harmony with the catastrophic theory of Cuvier, which you abandoned for the uniformitarianism of Lyell merely because it necessitated an occasional intervention of Divine omnipotence." I can imagine such a speech, but I do not hear it.

Many of my readers will remember the controversy that raged some time ago between Herbert Spencer and Dr. Weismann on the question whether natural selection alone is sufficient to account for the origin of species, or whether it should be supplemented by the transmission of acquired

parental qualities. The controversy was conducted with conspicuous ability on both sides, and other physiologists took part in the discussion, scarcely, if at all, inferior to the original disputants in knowledge and reasoning power. Which party got the better of the argument is out of my power to decide, and, indeed, it is not yet concluded; but one point struck me very forcibly as having been established beyond the reach of doubt, to judge by the unanimity with which it was assumed by all who expressed an opinion on either side. No one seemed to question for a moment that, however species originated, they were brought into existence by purely natural causes. Again, the supernaturalistic philosophers had an opportunity for urging the insufficiency of a mere physical hypothesis, the unreasonableness of rejecting miracles where their aid appeared most necessary; and again the opportunity was missed, or so feebly used that public opinion remained uninfluenced by the reminder.

Among various explanations of this strange anomaly that might be offered, the following seems the most probable: Physical science is understood to proceed solely by the method of induction, and it is as a result of induction that the theory of evolution has been accepted as applicable to the whole range of physical phenomena. Facts guaranteed by observation and experiment go to show that the heavenly bodies either are, or have been, in a state which can be fully accounted for only as a result of the aggregation of diffused matter moving in obedience to the law of gravitation, while opinions may well differ as to the

precise manner in which the aggregation took place. An examination of what is going on over the earth's surface shows it to be subjected to processes of upheaval, subsidence, denudation, erosion, and accumulation of fluviatile deposits; the prolonged action of these processes would account for any changes known to have ever occurred. Other inductive evidence justifies us in concluding that such action was actually exercised in the past; although the *modus operandi* in any particular instance leaves room for considerable diversity of opinion. Finally, ascending to biology, the anatomy and physiology of contemporary plants and animals, and the stratigraphical arrangement of extinct species, as demonstrated by geological research, carry home the conviction that, since the first dawn of life, no species has ever come into existence except as the offspring of some different and older species; and all that Darwinism, or any rival theory, attempts is to account for this admitted fact. To put the point somewhat differently, in those sciences that deal with the material universe naturalism holds the field; supernaturalist explanations only begin where our knowledge ends, and perpetually give way as it progresses. On the other hand, in the case of documents embodying the record of a revelation—assuming that a revelation has actually been given—the relation is reversed. Here supernaturalism occupies the positive pole, and naturalism the negative pole; the reference to ordinary causation only comes in when our faith ends, as the expression of an abstract possibility, the blank form of a scientific explanation where the

theological explanation has been arbitrarily rejected, and nothing definitely convincing can be put in its place.

Let us assume that the conservative theologians would accept such a vindication as I have here suggested of their very tolerant attitude towards physical science, contrasting so vividly with their contemptuous repudiation of the Higher Criticism ; and I have tried to put the case for them as strongly as I could. Observe what its adoption implies. Simply this, that when criticism employs the methods of induction it is entitled to the same respect as any other inductive science. Now, in point of fact, the Higher Criticism uses no other methods and makes no larger assumptions than any physical inquirer, while it takes much less for granted than the conservative theologians themselves.

So far I have spoken of the Higher Criticism as if the meaning of the term were universally understood. But, in truth, there are many worthy people to whom it conveys nothing more than a vague emotional association of mingled dread and contempt. Very often we find the mysterious bogey shut up in a cage of quotation marks, as if it were a detected impostor, not fit to go at large. Whether it is intended to cast doubt on the adjective or the substantive, or both, does not appear. We may talk without offence of the higher education and of the higher mathematics—nay, even of the higher theism or the higher pantheism; but not, it would seem, in any serious sense, of the higher criticism. Yet, what the unfortunate name denotes is, after all, something very simple and

very necessary. It merely means an inquiry into the composition, authenticity, and date of ancient documents. Such criticism is called "higher" in contradistinction to the "lower" or more elementary criticism which deals with correct readings and the exact meanings of words. No claim to superior dignity or difficulty is necessarily implied, only that the one criticism rests on and presupposes the other, just as the upper story of a house rests on its ground floor.

All ancient literature is amenable to the Higher Criticism ; although, from the language sometimes employed, one would think that it had never been heard of except in connection with the Bible. The Vedas, the Zend Avesta, Homer, Hesiod, the Platonic Dialogues, and some patristic writings, are favourite subjects for its exercise, often with results completely subversive of pre-conceived opinions. Certain Biblical critics have distinguished themselves in profane as well as in sacred literature. Eduard Zeller, the great historian of Greek philosophy, and Albert Schwegler, one of the greatest authorities on early Roman history, both belonged to the much-decried Tübingen School. Within the range of Biblical studies, even the humblest believers must sometimes become higher critics in their own despite, at least if they care to know when the Book of Job was written, or who was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The Book of Job suggests considerations highly relevant to our subject. It will scarcely be pretended that the results reached by a critic who sets himself to determine the date and authorship of

that wonderful drama need in any way be affected by his opinions about the supernatural. Miracles are related in it; but the most rigid conservatism does not insist on our believing that they actually happened. The story may be a parable, and not literally true. Accordingly, when the higher critics bring it down to the Persian period, or even later, the bitterest intolerance cannot pretend that they are actuated by sinister motives. Whether we assign it to the age of Moses or to the age of the Maccabees, its doctrinal value remains unaltered. So with regard to the alleged interpolations. It would be monstrous to assert that the critics who consider the speech of Elihu to be a later addition of workmanship inferior to the rest of the poem, do so because they find that it stands in the way of their private theories. The question is one of pure literature, of artistic taste, not of theological dogma at all. Of course, a similar remark applies to the other condemned passages, such as the descriptions of the mines, of Leviathan, and of Behemoth.

Another good instance is supplied by the Book of Ecclesiastes. Not long ago nearly everyone believed that this caustic satire was what it professes itself to be—a genuine work of Solomon. Thackeray would have been greatly surprised to hear that his favourite *Vanitas Vanitatum* was not really written by "King David's son the sad and splendid." Yet few scholars would now care to dispute the critical verdict which assigns Ecclesiastes to a date at least six centuries later than the time of Solomon. Here again no rationalistic or *à priori* principle was involved. Inductive

evidence alone decided the question, above all the late and debased Hebrew in which the book is written.

All the Hagiographa have in like manner been brought down to post-exilian times, and we might go through them all without finding a single instance to confirm the charge brought against criticism of arbitrarily rejecting whatever testifies to the supernatural, until we come to the Book of Daniel. Here, certainly, are miracles and prophecies of the most astounding description which must be given up as discredited fictions if Daniel is, what free inquiry has ever since Porphyry's time pronounced it to be, a Maccabean forgery. To a Rationalist the prophecies are of course in themselves decisive. But the inductive evidence is quite strong enough to carry conviction without the rationalistic argument, and, were it not for theological prejudice, would long since have been found convincing. The charge of forgery is brought home to pseudo-Daniel not by his true prophecies, but by his false history; by his false prediction of the coming judgment; by his corrupt Hebrew; by the silence of every witness who might have been expected to allude to him from Ezekiel to Ecclesiasticus.[1]

Travelling backwards through the Hebrew Bible, we find ourselves in the second great division known as the Prophets, and embracing, besides the writers now exclusively so-called, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. Here, also, the Higher

[1] The reference in Ezekiel is not to a contemporary, but to a very ancient celebrity.

Criticism has played havoc with old traditions, but only one of its achievements has excited much attention or called down much obloquy on its representatives. I refer to the assignment of many portions of Isaiah, and more particularly of chapters xl.–xlvi., to exilian or post-exilian authors. Here, at first sight, the apologist has an easy game, and can triumphantly carry an uninstructed audience along with him. "You look up and down the book," he will say, "for predictions of the fall of Babylon and of the Return from the Captivity, and wherever you find them you pronounce the whole chapter or section containing them to be a late interpolation or addition. That may be what you call scientific criticism. We, for our part, call it arbitrary, unscrupulous, and 'tendentious,' to use a word invented by your German friends." Those who use such language assume the possibility or, rather, the actual occurrence of miracles which not merely transcend the experience of life, but also transgress the laws of probability and reason. If God ever interferes with the order of nature to the extent of revealing the course of events in the distant future, it must, one would suppose, be as a warning or as a consolation for those to whom the vision is vouchsafed, not as a theatrical exercise of superhuman power. But the contemporaries of Isaiah knew Babylon only as a subject city of Nineveh and a possible ally of its enemies, not as the conqueror and despoiler of Judah ; to be assured of its downfall some two centuries later would neither have purified their morals nor strengthened their faith, even supposing them to have listened to the

prophet, which they most certainly would not have done. But what gives the Higher Criticism a solid inductive basis is the evidence of language, and by this it is prepared to abide in every instance where a received date has been changed.

In the Hexateuch we have a series of narratives swarming with miracles and prophecies, while in the higher criticism of the Hexateuch we have results of the most revolutionary character that Biblical inquiry, or indeed any branch of ancient history, has ever known. But neither in this instance can it be shown that the criticism was prompted by a desire to get rid of the miracles and prophecies, nor if they were reduced to the proportion of ordinary occurrences would the convincing force of the new views be appreciably diminished. The literary analysis into three distinct series of documents running through the whole compilation would still hold good; the evidence of Hebrew historians and prophets would still prove that the series constituting the Priestly Code was unknown till long after the Return from Babylon, and that the Deuteronomic series was unknown before Josiah and Jeremiah; the analogies of legend would still render it overwhelmingly probable that the patriarchs of the earliest narratives were eponymous heroes who never existed; physical science and ancient history would still prove to demonstration that the stories of the Creation, the Fall, the Deluge, and the Tower of Babel are simple myths. If it be once granted that these results have been obtained by a trustworthy method, it is not, I think, assuming too much to say that such prophecies as the Blessing of Jacob and the

Song of Moses were composed after the event, and may be used for dating the passages in which they occur.

When Bishop Colenso entered on his epoch-making examination of the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua, he expressly disclaimed any intention of assailing the credibility of the miraculous narratives as such. At the time a very clever woman observed to the present writer that the Bishop resembled a man who should say, "My dear little fish, you need not be afraid of me, I don't want to catch you; I am only going to drain the pond in which you live." At the present moment the water is very low not only in the Hexateuch, but throughout the Old Testament; most of the fish are dead, and the rest are gasping for breath. Starting, as we have seen, with no prejudices whatever on the subject, the Higher Criticism has proved far more fatal to supernaturalism than that old-fashioned rationalism which was content to strike out or explain away the miraculous portions of Biblical history, while leaving their reputed authorship and general authenticity intact. Rather I should say that the Higher Criticism, without departing from the prudent reserve with which it began, has furnished ample materials for an authoritative judgment to a still higher science for whose sake alone it is worth studying—the science of historical evidence. This science refuses to accept any story not intrinsically probable, except on the testimony of eye-witnesses, or, at the very least, of contemporaries. If a narrator is proved to have made false statements on matters of ordinary experience, his testimony to

extraordinary occurrences has no value. If such occurrences are not mentioned by older and apparently more trustworthy narrators of the same history, then the probability that they did not take place becomes extreme. If two narratives of equal value give inconsistent accounts of the same alleged occurrence, the improbability of its having taken place in the manner described is proportioned to the extent of their divergence. One need only apply these canons to the Hexateuch, Judges, and Samuel, as they now may be studied in the light of the Higher Criticism, for the consequences to become at once apparent. The oldest and best "Mosaic" narratives are probably at least five centuries later than the events that they relate; the most recent are nine centuries later. The Priestly record is a deliberate wholesale fabrication; the Deuteronomist, where he does not copy his predecessors, is a pious romancer; the Elohist and the Iahwist differ from one another, in some respects rather widely; the Iahwist document itself shows signs of being a disjointed amalgam. The story of Balaam is made up of at least two contradictory versions, and one of these versions excludes the incident of the talking ass, which belongs to the Iahwist. Let who will believe in the abstract possibility of that performance: can anyone seriously believe that an ass was endowed with a human voice in order to rebuke her master for doing a thing which he had been divinely commanded to do, and which, when he did it, redounded to the glory of Israel and of Israel's God? Literary analysis, when applied to the story of Gideon, leaves it in its original form a series of perfectly natural

incidents; and the same may be said of the story of Saul's election to the kingdom. Professor Cheyne has shown in his last work on Isaiah how the story of the moving back of the shadow on the dial—one of the very few miraculous incidents in the history of Judah—was gradually built up in three successive redactions. Of the Elijah and Elisha group of miracles we can only say that they are unsupported by evidence as good as might be quoted for the most extravagant stories of the mediæval saints.

With regard to prophecy in the sense of supernatural prediction, little need be said. As we have seen, the Higher Criticism shows by inductive evidence that the Second Isaiah and Daniel spoke not of future but of contemporary events; the same is true of the Pentateuchal prophecies; many alleged predictions of the literary prophets were not offered as such by their authors, but owe their traditional character to a perverted exegesis; while the announcements, certainly numerous enough, of Israel's redemption and glorification have been signally falsified by history. As to the pretended "Christology of the Old Testament," it has long been dissipated by such a sober interpretation of the texts as would be admitted without dispute in the case of any other document.

I fear that before this some of my readers may have been getting a little impatient. They have perhaps been saying to themselves: "Yes, of course this is all very true of the Old Testament, and we knew every word of it before. But the real question, the only interesting question, is about the New Testament, and especially about the Gospels. They stand on quite a different footing

from the Hexateuch and Judges. There are certain stories in the latter that we are not sorry to get rid of. The revelation of Jesus Christ is quite another matter. We neither wish nor are we obliged to part with it. And why should we? Because some stories are mythical does it follow that all are? Because the heroic legends of Greece and Rome are worthless as history, does it follow that we are to lose all confidence in Thucydides and Julius Cæsar, in Demosthenes and Cicero? Ought not the evidence that suffices to prove an ordinary event suffice to prove a miracle where miracles were to be expected, as in this instance they were? For Christianity is itself the standing wonder, only explicable by reference to the personality of Christ as set forth in the Gospels. And then"— But this is not a dialogue, and I am not a thought-reader. Let me recall the question to its original limitations. Our object was to inquire into the truth of a grave charge brought against the Higher Criticism—the charge of preferring a less to a more probable explanation of the same facts, because the more probable explanation would involve the admission that miracles may happen. I have tried to show that, so far as the Old Testament goes, this charge is unfounded. So complete an acquittal of the critics in respect to so important a branch of their activity furnishes at least a strong presumption that in dealing with the documents of early Christianity they have not thrown scientific method to the winds. Sometimes the same men have cultivated both fields, as Ewald, Reuss, and Samuel Davidson; in all cases they have been trained in the same schools and are animated by

the same spirit. Suppose it true that they have sometimes gone too far in their negations, or at least farther than a cautious conservatism would approve: their temerity may be easily paralleled in the labours of classical scholarship where hostility to the supernatural cannot be supposed to bias the inquirer. No aspersion is ever cast on the scientific honour of a Hellenist who holds that the speeches in Thucydides are entirely manufactured by that historian, or that Socrates never uttered a single sentence that is put into his mouth by Plato, or that several of the Platonic Dialogues are spurious. Not long ago Xenophon's *Memorabilia* was generally accepted as a genuine account of the Socratic teaching. Several portions of it are now suspected to be very far from deserving that character, yet no outcry has been raised.

Again, it is entirely unwarrantable to assert, as Dr. Salmon does,[1] that critics who disbelieve in the supernatural are on that account interested in denying the authenticity of the books where miracles are related. I should like to ask Dr. Salmon, or any other orthodox Protestant divine, whether he believes in the miraculousness of that extraordinary series of cures related in full detail by St. Augustine at the end of his treatise *De Civitate Dei*, and, if not, whether his incredulity has ever inclined him to reject the treatise itself, or this particular part of it, as a forgery. I have little doubt that he would manage to combine the most absolute disbelief in the miracles as such with the most unhesitating acceptance of the record as

[1] *Historical Introduction to the Books of the New Testament*, p. 8.

coming from the pen of the great Father. At any rate, if I cannot answer for Dr. Salmon, I can answer for the higher critics. If the evidence of eye-witnesses could convert rationalists to a belief in miracles, incredulity on this point would long ago have ceased to trouble the apologist, and Protestantism would have ceased to trouble Rome.

But, as I have said before, there are miracles that the Higher Criticism does reject in a very summary manner—miracles that would be wonders without being signs; miracles that, so far from being of any evidentiary value, would, if they were established, be the destruction of all logical evidence whatsoever; miracles that are a derogation, not from the course of nature, but from the laws of reason. Now these are miracles that apologetic orthodoxy accepts, and attacks the critics for not accepting. If the story of the Virgin-birth were true, how could two such inconsistent accounts of it as those given by the first and the third Evangelist both be current in the early decades of Christian history? How could St. Paul not know it; or, knowing, not allude to it? If the raising of Lazarus is a historical event, how could it escape the notice of the Synoptics? How could the same teacher deliver to the same audience during the same period discourses differing so widely, both in form and matter, as the speeches of Jesus in the First or Third and those in the Fourth Gospel? How could one so gifted with supernatural prescience as to foretell the circumstances of the siege and capture of Jerusalem in the minute detail of the Third Gospel, be so utterly mistaken as to declare, in the words of the Second Gospel, that

the end of the world would come within the lifetime of some who were then born (Mark xiii. 30)? Surely modern criticism is entirely within its rights when, just as in the case of Daniel, it uses these two predictions, one fabricated and the other falsified, to place "St. Mark" and "St. Luke" at such a distance from the events they record as to take them out of the category of eye-witnesses, or even of those who derived their information from eye-witnesses.

The question whether the Fourth Gospel was or was not written by St. John is often ignorantly or wilfully confused with a quite different question—the value of Baur's theory as to the evolution of primitive Christianity. In reality the two are quite distinct. First, the untrustworthiness of the gospel was proved. Then and only then did there arise the necessity of asking when and where and by whom was it written. It would no doubt be highly satisfactory if these points could be cleared up. But no constructive solution of the problem could add to the real strength of the destructive criticism which it necessarily presupposes, nor can the fragility of any particular solution take away from that strength. As to the Tübingen theory, it probably retains as much value as any other scientific theory that has now been before the world for fifty years. Let it not be supposed that science alone shares with woman the privilege of changing her mind. Orthodoxy changes also. Compare *Lux Mundi* with *Aids to Faith;* compare the present attitude of Rome towards the higher criticism of the Old Testament with her attitude in Renan's youth. Of course I know what

orthodox theologians will say. They have discovered that propositions once supposed to be *de fide* are really open questions. But that is enough. The definition of faith changes with startling rapidity, and perhaps we have not yet reached the limit of its transformations.

We have seen that the higher criticism of the Old Testament, although it did not begin by denying the miraculous, ended by denying it, or rather by leaving the science of historical evidence free to deny it. What, then, it may be asked, is the result towards which New Testament criticism points? It seems to me that the final verdict must be the same. That miracles should go on increasing in magnitude, the farther we go from the place and time of their alleged occurrence, is a circumstance that cannot fail to awaken suspicion. Now the miracles of the Fourth Gospel are the most astounding of all, and are related with the strongest emphasis on their supernatural character and on their evidentiary value as manifestations of the divine omnipotence. There is something particularly Hellenic about the writer's consciousness in this respect—his extreme anxiety to differentiate the miraculous sign from the ordinary course of nature, and to surround it with every guarantee of authenticity. What we find is a wise economy, not, as with the Synoptics, a rank profusion of marvels. There are no cases of diabolical possession, because the Fourth Evangelist, believing though he did in a supreme power of evil, belonged to a society that was too philosophical to explain epilepsy and hysteria, as the lowest savage might, by the presence of malignant spirits. Now it is just this

gospel that criticism, for quite other reasons, considers last in order of time, and in the order of ideas most remote from Jewish or Palestinian habits of thought.

Criticism has disengaged from the Acts of the Apostles a contemporary document of high value, supposed to be written by a companion of St. Paul, and known as the "we-source"; it has also subjected the earlier portions of the book to a searching comparison with the parallel narratives contained in the genuine epistles of St. Paul himself. Confining our attention to the supernatural, we find least of it (if, indeed, there be any) in the "we-source," and most in the legendary narratives bearing marks of a comparatively late origin; while the Pentecostal gift of tongues, which in Acts offers such an extraordinary spectacle of divine power, shrinks in St. Paul to a performance very much on a level with the phenomena of the Irvingite church.

On grounds of literary analysis, criticism declares the Second Gospel to be the oldest of the Synoptics. But this document has nothing about the virgin-birth of Jesus, and, when freed of later additions, nothing about the Ascension. According to it, Jesus died with an exclamation of despair on his lips quite incompatible with the prevision of his speedy return to life. His reported refusal to work miracles is probably authentic, as there would have been no reason for inventing it at a time when thaumaturgic powers were freely attributed to him; and we can still see how his appeal to the "sign of the prophet Jonah" was afterwards apologetically corrected into a prediction of his own death, burial,

and resurrection. The words "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," by the way, point to a variation of the resurrection-story not otherwise recognised in our gospels.

My object in the foregoing pages has not been to defend the methods and results of the higher Biblical criticism, nor even, except in the briefest manner, to recapitulate them. Nor have I attempted to discuss the general problem of the supernatural in its relations to the order of nature. My object has been to show the hollowness, if not the insincerity, of a plea put forward for the purpose of suppressing discussion by denying the right of rationalistic critics to speak at all about subjects to which they have devoted their lives. At the same time, I have suggested the motive that lies at the bottom of this discreditable attempt. Beyond doubt, many, perhaps most, of the higher critics disbelieve in miracles and supernatural predictions. I will go further still and freely grant that with some of them, such as Strauss, Renan, and Mr. Walter Cassels (the author of *Supernatural Religion*), the denial is based on philosophical considerations. But Renan, at any rate, combined for many years with his absolute disbelief in miracles a belief that the gospels were written by the men whose names they bear; and when he partially abandoned this position, it was under the stress of historical, not of philosophical, arguments. Now this is just what the enemies of criticism find so irritating—that the evidence of history is turning against them; that the documents, when scientifically investigated, should, as it were, of themselves, fall into a progressive series exhibiting more and more of the

supernatural the farther removed they are from the original events, and a decline of truthfulness going along with an increase of intellectual culture in the narrators the farther removed they are from the original eye-witnesses. Such is the power and flexibility of modern philosophy that, once released from the necessity of verification, it can be made to prove or disprove anything. So the modern apologist flies to speculation whenever he has the chance, in the hope that his ark of faith may ride triumphant on a deluge of scepticism.

> Verachte nur Vernunft und Wissenschaft,
> Des Menschen allerhöchste Kraft,
> So hab' ich dich!

said Mephistopheles a hundred and twenty years ago. The new Mephistopheles, disguised as an angel of light, sees in historical reason and historical science alone the barrier that separates him from his victims. "Thank heaven we have got rid of history!" a Jesuit Father is reported to have exclaimed when Papal Infallibility was voted. His Protestant brother would gladly get rid of it also. As good a device for the purpose as any other is to damage the reputation of the laborious inquirers who clear the way for true history and accumulate the materials for its edifice; to substitute for the decisive issues of experience the interminable wrangles of metaphysics; above all, to convert an appeal to reason into an appeal to authority. Perhaps there would be a good case for anyone who chose to maintain that there is a greater weight of learning and ability and disinterestedness on the progressive side. But we have no wish to exchange one bondage for another. Our object is not that

the Higher Criticism should be reverenced, but that it should be read. Doubtless the official apologists will say that in this respect they have done their duty. Let them then prove their familiarity with the arguments of their opponents by fair statements and fair replies, not by confusing the outcome of an inquiry with the assumptions from which it sets out.

PASCAL'S WAGER[1]

A CERTAIN rustic moralist in Mr. Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* gives his opinion about the relative chances of salvation contingent on attending church or chapel in the following homely but telling terms :—

"We know very well that if anybody goes to heaven they [chapel-folk] will. They've worked hard for it and they deserve to have it, such as 'tis. I'm not such a fool as to pretend that we who stick to the church have the same chance as they, because we know we have not. But I hate a feller who'll change his old ancient doctrine for the sake of getting to heaven."

So far the excellent Coggan, for such is the name of Mr. Hardy's pot-house philosopher. Whether churchmen or dissenters should be credited with the better chance of salvation is a deep question in which I do not now propose to enter. The Conformist and the Nonconformist conscience may safely be left to take care of themselves. But the ingenuous confidences of this particular churchman suggest a problem of wider interest on which I

[1] A remarkable passage in Dr. McTaggart's work entitled *Some Dogmas of Religion* (pp. 213–16) presents so close a parallel with one of the arguments put forth in the following pages that I might incur the charge of borrowing without acknowledgment were the fact not mentioned that my essay was originally published in the *International Journal of Ethics* for April, 1905, a year before the appearance of the work referred to, and that Dr. McTaggart had certainly read it, as is proved by the quotation from Pascal on p. 213 of his book.

propose to offer a few remarks. Is there any method of salvation that may be called distinctly mean? I believe there is at least one such, and I am sorry to say that it is a method recommended by no less an authority than Pascal.

What the French call "*le pari de Pascal*"—in English, Pascal's wager or bet—forms the theme of one of the most celebrated passages in his fragmentary defence of Christianity, published after his death and universally known as the *Pensées*. A very elaborate edition of this work, filling three large volumes in the great series of French classics, which is one of the glories of French bibliography, has recently appeared.[1] Nearly the whole of the first volume is occupied by an elaborate Introduction, in which all the literary facts necessary for the full understanding of Pascal's position are brought together. Then comes a presumably immaculate text accompanied by an ample array of critical and explanatory notes, the Thoughts themselves being so arranged in sections as to exhibit themselves to the best logical advantage; and the whole is completed by what is rare in French books, an excellent index. So far as externals go, we cannot expect that this splendid and sombre genius will ever make a better appearance before the world than in M. Léon Brunschvicg's edition.

Pascal's apologetics are as obsolete as his satire on the Jesuits is fresh and living. The Higher Criticism has ruined his theory of Christian evidences. Evolution has ruined his theory of the

[1] The references in this essay are to this edition.

Fall. And what some modern mathematicians defend with arguments no more solid than his would not have been recognised by him as the true faith. But one, at least, of his points has secured an undying literary interest from the extraordinary energy and passion with which the case is put rather than from any peculiar ingenuity or originality in the thought itself. This is the argument of the wager to which I have already referred.

It runs as follows. Speaking by the light of nature, says Pascal, God, supposing him to exist, must be out of relation to ourselves. Being without parts or limits, he is infinitely incomprehensible. We can neither know what he is, nor even that he is. This admission goes beyond that form of modern Agnosticism according to which we can say with certainty that the Unknowable exists, but not what it is. And, of course, it goes very far beyond Herbert Spencer's affirmation of an Unknowable which is infinite, eternal, an energy, and the cause of all things. But we are not to take so sceptical a confession as defining Pascal's own position. Being a Christian, he has other sources of information than the light of nature. His supposed sceptic—who turns out to be a very real sceptic with a place in French literary history—has none. But the sceptic's ignorance cuts both ways. It leaves the non-existence of God as uncertain as his existence. Reason supplies no means of choosing between the two alternative possibilities. Nevertheless, we are obliged to back one side or the other, to play at a game of hazard in which, at an infinite distance, heads or tails will turn up. "But," answers the sceptic, "I do not

want to play at all; in such a doubtful case as what you describe prudence bids us abstain." To which Pascal replies: "You must bet; you are in for it; it does not depend on your will." For as his Port Royalist editors put it, in an elucidatory addition to the text, "Not to bet is to bet for the non-existence of God."

Plato observes, in the *Republic,* that he "hardly ever met a mathematician who could reason" (531 E). So, at least, Jowett translates the passage —not, perhaps, without a spice of malice. According to some, the word he uses (διαλεκτικοί) does not exactly imply what we mean by ability to reason. But I think it will be admitted to imply the power so signally displayed by Plato himself in the *Parmenides*—the power, that is, of exhaustively enumerating the possible issues in a given question, and of deducing the necessary consequences in each instance. And it seems to me that, whatever may be the case with modern mathematicians as a class, Pascal shows himself remarkably deficient in that sort of dialectical ability—so much so, indeed, as to ruin the basis of his whole argument at the very start. The deficiency may or may not be connected with his great mathematical genius; anyhow it is there.

Why must I bet? No reason whatever is given, but it needs only a very slight acquaintance with the dogmatic Christianity of Pascal's time to supply what he leaves unsaid. To be saved man must believe positively in the existence of God; to leave it an open question is to incur the same penalty as complete atheism—that is, eternal damnation.

Here we come at once on a flagrant self-contradiction, which, even if it stood alone, would leave the sceptic triumphant. Pascal began by saying that God, as infinite, is unrelated to us (*il n' a nul rapport à nous*). But, if so, he can neither save nor damn us: our future fate has nothing to do with his existence or non-existence, still less with our opinion or absence of opinion on the subject.

I do not profess to know much about the turf; but I strongly suspect that anyone who had such loose notions as Pascal about the laws of betting, if he acted on them, would soon be cleared out of every penny he possessed—that is, supposing his ignorance to be real; while, if it were assumed for the purpose of eluding payment, he would before long find himself turned off every race-course in England.

However, we will let that pass. We will suppose that the words "out of relation" slipped in by an unfortunate oversight, and would have been deleted had the author lived to see his work through the press; noting, however, that they were allowed to stand by the logicians of Port Royal, who otherwise made free enough with his manuscript. Let it be granted as not impossible that the infinite Being, if he exist, is no other than the God of Catholicism. But there is a long way from possibility to certainty, and Pascal himself has warned us that the knowledge, if any, of God's existence is quite distinct from the knowledge of his attributes. Assuming there to be a God, that bare fact leaves us in absolute ignorance about his character. Now it might fairly be contended that the number of different characters which may

possibly be ascribed to an infinite being is infinite, and even infinite in the second degree on account of the possible permutations and combinations of attributes. Accordingly, the conditions of the wager must be altered. Pascal has appealed to the light of reason, and to reason he must go. Apart from objective evidence, of which there is at present no question, the chances against his theology's being true are at least infinity to one.

It is, however, on the cards that Pascal, admitting so much, might still maintain that a man of sense was justified in staking his life on the existence of God. In order to make this clear we must examine the conditions of the wager.

"If you win," he tells us, "you win everything; if you lose, you lose nothing." In the more concrete language of religious belief, if there is a God and you have faith in his promises you gain everlasting felicity; if there is no God, death ends all. It is not precisely explained what is meant by staking your life; but, as Pascal is addressing himself to a careless worldling, he must be supposed to mean what such a person would call "life"—that is to say, an existence of sensual and social enjoyment. The author of the *Thoughts* would not admit that the abandonment of such a life involved any real sacrifice; and so far the serious moralist of any religion or of no religion would not be disposed to quarrel with him. But in fact, as we shall see presently, there is much more involved—certainly more than the sage who finds life "very tolerable without its amusements" is prepared to give up.

Of course no Christian, and Pascal less than another, believes that eternal felicity can be won as

the fruit of such a cold-blooded calculation, such brutal cynicism, to use M. Sully Prudhomme's blunt phrase,[1] as would seem to be implied by the aleatory proceeding recommended. Simply as a bet it would, to the Searcher of all hearts, be no more than the celebrated short prayer, "O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul!" In fact, it is only the first step towards acquiring a genuine conviction. And Pascal does not leave us in doubt about the second step. His sceptic is made to reply: "I fully acknowledge the force of your reasoning. But is there no way of seeing the faces of the cards?" "Yes, there are the Scriptures, *etc.*" "But what if I am so constituted that I cannot believe?" "Do what others in your position have done before. Act as if you believed; take holy water, attend Mass, *etc.* The natural effect of all that will be to make you believe, and to stupify you *(vous abêtira)*." "But that is just what I am afraid of." "Why so? What have you to lose?"

I do not think that such a method would commend itself to the ingenuous mind of Mr. Hardy's rustic. I fear Coggan would "hate a feller" who submitted to such a degradation "for the sake of getting to heaven." Even the Port Royal editors were ashamed to print this precious advice, softening it down into a harmless recommendation to imitate the conduct of believers. Victor Cousin was the first to publish the words as they were originally written. That brilliant rhetorician was neither a deep nor a sincere thinker; but he still

[1] In his article entitled "Le Sens et la Portée du Pari de Pascal," in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of November 15th, 1890.

retained some respect for truth and reason. He asked, Was that, then, the last word of human wisdom, and can we only approach the supreme Intelligence by the sacrifice of our own? But nowadays, among orthodox Frenchmen, Victor Cousin would pass for a dangerous character—an "intellectual." M. Brunschvicg defends Pascal by putting a sense on his words which they will not bear. *S'abêtir*, he tells us, means no more than that we should get rid of the prejudices which stand in the way of faith. Surely, if so great a writer wanted to say this, he had command enough of the French language to say it for himself. A course of dogmatic theology, however disagreeable, would, one might suppose, be more effective against rationalistic prejudices than a course of holy water. Pascal was a shrewd observer, and understood the effect of mechanical devotion better, perhaps, than his apologist. One need only study the faces in a Bavarian *Corpus Domini* procession or at a Breton *Pardon* to see what "abêtissement" means.

Besides a natural if sinful objection to part with his reason, the sceptic has still a difficulty. The hope of salvation is all very well, but against the happiness it gives we have to set the fear of hell. To which Pascal replies, sensibly enough from his point of view: Which has more reason to fear it, he who remains in ignorance if there be a hell, with the certainty of being damned if there is one, or he who is certainly persuaded of its existence, with the hope of being saved if it does exist?

This is a very important passage. Both Ernest Havet, in his notes to the *Pensées*, and M. Sully Prudhomme, in his essay on the wager, have

assumed, as not needing discussion, that backing the wrong side involves not only the loss of eternal felicity, but also the positive payment of an infinite penalty under the form of everlasting torment. A more recent critic, however, repudiates their interpretation. The eminent philosopher M. Lachelier, writing in the *Revue Philosophique*,[1] declares peremptorily that hell has no place in the wager. As the terms are first stated it certainly is not mentioned; but to insist on the omission seems more like a lawyer than a philosopher. And even from the strictly legal point of view M. Lachelier's contention seems unjustifiable. In drawing out the full significance of the wager we have a right to interpret its conditions in the light of its author's known and unconcealed opinions about the future fate of unbelievers. To say that I am obliged to bet must mean that my refusal would entail the same consequences as if I betted against God's existence and lost. And that must be more than the mere privation of eternal felicity, for so much the sceptic is already prepared to face with equanimity. Besides, when he asks to see the faces of the cards played Pascal refers him to Scripture for information; and we know that in the eyes of a seventeenth-century Catholic Scripture consigns the infidel to eternal torment.

One is almost ashamed to labour so obvious a point. But it is a question of some interest why the chance of damnation is left to be inferred when it might have been made to figure with such tremendous effect in the wager as originally stated.

[1] June, 1901, p. 625.

I apprehend that the reason is one of simple politeness. Pascal, as Walter Pater reminds us,[1] was a gentleman ; and the sceptic for whose benefit he started the whole idea of making the supreme verities a subject of betting was also a gentleman and a dear friend of his, the Chevalier de Méré, a man of the world, and apparently, like others of the kind, a gamester. That is why Pascal addresses him in terms borrowed from the favourite amusement of his class ; and that is also, I suggest, why he spares him words not suited to polite ears. Both, however, understand perfectly what the truth of the Catholic theory would imply. A losing bettor not only misses infinite happiness, but has to pay the stakes by suffering infinite misery. And with great tact the first reference to this unpleasant aspect of the wager is put into the mouth, not of the Christian advocate, but of the hesitating sceptic. Méré, not Pascal, is made responsible for introducing it into the discussion. To convince ourselves that the softening down of the risk incurred by infidelity is a mere concession to the rules of personal politeness, we need only turn to the passages where Pascal has to deal with mankind in general. Here the loss of felicity is not mentioned as a motive for belief. With his usual and incomparable splendour of rhetoric, he describes death as infallibly destined to place the impious and indifferent under the horrible necessity of submitting either to eternal annihilation or to eternal misery, without knowing which of these eternities has been prepared for them for ever.[2] And this alternative,

[1] *Works,* VIII., p. 63. [2] II., p. 121.

such as it is, must not be thought of as existing objectively in the nature of things, or rather in the unknown purposes of Providence, but subjectively in the reasonable apprehensions of the doubter.

Judged by Jesuit or modern Ultramontane standards, the author of the *Provinciales* and the *Pensées* may have been a heretic. But he was far too good a Catholic to entertain for a moment the idea that hell could mean annihilation. He speaks *ad hominem*. If you are right in your unbelief, you will cease to exist at death; if you are wrong, you will certainly be tormented for ever.

So much being established, let us return to the wager and its implications. It was presented under the form of an even chance, with nothing to lose (except one's reason) on the one event, and everything to gain on the other. One is struck by the suspicious resemblance to a plea sometimes advanced for trying a quack remedy. It may do good, and it can't do harm. Now, in the case of a drug about which we know nothing—for the modesty of that "may do good" is really a confession of complete ignorance—the possibility of harm is precisely measured by the possibility of benefit. For us the chances are equal, because neither event is anything more than a chance. And an attentive examination shows that Pascal's reasoning suffers from the same fatal flaw.

From respect for so great a name two enormous assumptions have been let pass. We withdrew our objection to the logical impossibility that a Being out of all relation to man can affect man's future fate. And we accepted as an even chance the infinitesimally small probability that an infinite

personality, supposing it to exist, has exactly the character of the God in whom Jansenist Catholics believed. But our concessions must end here. What security has Méré that in accepting the wager he sacrifices no more than his reason and the healthy enjoyment of life? "You have," says his friend, "the word of God." Is that so certain? or is it a sufficient guarantee? It will not do to call the question blasphemous, for our moralist has imbued us with the idea that truth is a matter of geography, and we know what the Nicene Creed would be called across the straits of Gibraltar.

Here we have the nemesis of agnosticism as a method of faith. A universal solvent is created and then poured into some consecrated chalice in the ingenuous expectation that the holy vessel will resist its corrosive action. In a series of brilliant aphorisms congealing the loose and lazy scepticisms of Montaigne into a hailstorm of diamond-pointed epigrams, Pascal had denounced the supposed eternal laws of human morality as a set of arbitrary expedients, varying from country to country, and merely intended to win respect for the authority of their princes. From such a discordant medley of customs no fixed moral standard or natural system of ethics can be elicited. Still less can our ideas of what is right and good be applied to the criticism of God's ways with man. Anterior to revelation we cannot predicate morality, more than any other attribute, of the infinite Being; nor can a self-revealing Deity be expected to act in conformity with human notions of right and wrong when those notions are not conformable with one another.

Pascal accepts the consequences of his sceptical

theology with cynical candour. "What," he exclaims, "can be more opposed to our wretched rules of justice than the eternal damnation of a child without any will of its own for a sin in which it seems to have had so little share that it was committed six thousand years before the said child came into existence?"[1] In fact, moral distinctions are created by God; and "the sole reason why sins are sins is that they are contrary to his will."[2] Were the whole human race to be eternally damned, God would stand acquitted of injustice.[3]

Nevertheless, with an inconsistency not uncommon among sceptics Pascal recognises one kind of moral obligation as universally binding, so much so as even to impose itself on God in his relations to man. And that is the obligation of keeping a promise. It is mentioned quite naïvely as a self-evident truth, valid apparently on both sides of the Pyrenees. "There is a reciprocal duty between God and man.....God is bound to fulfil his promises."[4] If we have backed the winning card, the stakes will be honestly paid.

I know not what answer the Chevalier de Méré made to the aleatory apologetics of his illustrious friend; but his conversion was delayed so long as probably to have been effected by considerations of a different order. He might well have required a better security for the divine fidelity than Pascal's guarantee. It seems rather rash to infer that, because a gentleman keeps his word and pays his debts of honour, the Jansenist God will. A Being who is wholly unaccountable may mean something

[1] II., p. 348. [2] III., p. 104. [3] I., p. 125.
[4] III., pp. 277–8.

different from what he says, or the exact opposite, or nothing at all. An irresponsible despot is generally not less remarkable for perfidy than for cruelty. He who predestines little children to eternal damnation may quite possibly be reserving the Sisters of Port Royal for the same fate. We were told that the whole human race might justly be sent to hell, and how do we know that the full divine right may not after all be exercised. "We have the word of a King for our Church, and of a King who was never worse than his word." Such was the confident answer of the English Bishops to those who suspected the intentions of James II. History tells how their credulity was rewarded.

What is more, Pascal's interpretation of Scripture goes to prove that deceit and treachery are among the revealed attributes of his God. A particularly nauseous quality of that personage is that, not content with exercising his undoubted privilege of damning human beings at sight, he tries to manufacture a colourable pretext for their condemnation by introducing difficulties into the Bible. "There is obscurity enough to blind the reprobate, and clearness enough to make them inexcusable."[1] "Do you suppose that the prophecies quoted in the New Testament are mentioned to make you believe? No, it is to prevent you from believing."[2] The whole Jewish people were purposely blinded to the real meaning of the Messianic prophecies in order that their rejection of Jesus Christ might render them unsuspected witnesses to the authenticity of the evidentiary documents committed to

[1] III., p. 23. [2] III., p. 15.

their charge. Had they accepted the gospel, it might have been said that they had forged the predictions by which its supernatural origin is attested, and of whose antiquity their word is the sole guarantee.[1]

It would surprise me to learn that there was any greater distortion of truth and justice in the casuistry of Escobar than in the sophistry of his Jansenist satirist. And the Jesuits, if they erred, had at least the excuse of erring on the side of mercy. They constructed fire-escapes where Pascal opens *oubliettes*.

Our only knowledge of God, our only proof that there is a God, comes through the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament and their fulfilment in Jesus Christ. But it is of the very essence of these prophecies to be ambiguous and misleading. We asked to be shown the cards with which that awful game for our soul's salvation is being played "at an infinite distance," and our wish has been gratified: the cards are no other than the pages of Scripture. And now we learn that their colour and value depend entirely on the inscrutable will of the dealer. He can call black red and a king a knave. He can change trumps at pleasure and count an ace as eleven points or as one. That is how his antitype, Napoleon, played chess, moving the pieces just as he liked, regardless of rules. Our Ariel-souled thinker constructs a God meaner if not more malignant than the Setebos of Caliban, in that wonderful study of Robert Browning's which is also such a scathing satire on the

[1] II., p. 16 ff.

creed of his youth. Granting that such a person exists, our conduct cannot be affected one way or the other by the fact. Being unable to take his word for anything, we are exactly in the same position as if he had never spoken. Perhaps after all he is less amenable to the charms of adulation and submission than his more abject adorers would have us believe. Our moral superiority over him may at last make its ascendancy felt. Possibly in that case his first impulse would be to wreak vengeance on the reptile souls who sought to stupefy their reason by the copious use of masses and holy water. Then we who never stooped to that degradation will intercede with the converted Moloch for the shivering wretches, who may escape with no worse penalty than transmigration into the bodies of apes.

Briefly, then, the existence of an infinite Being out of relation to ourselves cannot possibly influence our future fate. In the absence of positive evidence it remains infinitely improbable that an infinite Being actively related to us should have a character identical with that of the Jansenist deity. Assuming such a deity to exist, the chances are precisely equal that he will or that he will not behave towards us in any particular manner. Therefore, so far as theology goes, Méré is rationally justified in adopting the line of conduct that seems most agreeable to his own desires. When the door of death opens it is even betting whether the lady or the tiger will receive him.

Metaphor apart, no revelation can be of any practical value unless it is assumed to come from a person whose word we can trust. But the veracity

of God is only guaranteed by his general moral perfection, and such perfection can only be conceived as the consummation of human goodness. But goodness includes justice as known to us by earthly examples, and these, according to Pascal himself, forbid us to believe that innocent little children can merit eternal torments—or, we may add, that Méré could merit them for honestly using his reason to find out the truth, or even the judges of Galileo for suppressing it. In theology the method of Descartes is a surer guide than the method of Montaigne.

The idea of accepting Christianity (understood in an orthodox sense) as a probability which seems safer to believe than to disbelieve has been traced back to Arnobius, from whom Pascal is supposed to have derived it through Raymond Sebond, whose *Natural Theology* he had certainly read. But the after fortunes of the argument are more interesting than its origin. It had the singular good fortune to be taken up by Butler and made the very keynote of his *Analogy,* whence it passed to the leaders of the Tractarian Movement, betraying its inherent weakness by the conflicting interpretations respectively put on it by Newman and Keble.

I do not know whether Butler had or had not read Pascal ; but his theory of probability as applied to the evidences of Christianity is a distinct improvement on the wager, in so far as it encourages instead of abolishing the use of reason. On the other hand, his appeal to the most degrading of all " pragmatic " motives is considerably more explicit, and will hardly be denied even by the most

unscrupulous of apologists. After detailing the arguments for revealed religion based on the performance of miracles and the fulfilment of prophecy, he shows an uneasy consciousness of their insufficiency, but urges as a make-weight that "a mistake on the one side may be, in its consequences, much more dangerous than a mistake on the other."[1] Butler alleges, it is true, that he gives this ominous warning, not to influence the judgment, but the practice, of his readers. The distinction, however, is not easy to grasp, nor is any attempt made to illustrate it. If his sole object was to strengthen the motives for virtuous action irrespective of creed, he ought to have made his meaning plainer. Many of the Deists would have agreed with him in recommending a high and pure standard of morality, while deprecating the attempt to compromise it by a reference to selfish hopes or fears. In any case, judgment and practice cannot be isolated from one another, nor made amenable to different orders of motives, least of all when we are discussing a creed most of whose advocates consider that a man is morally responsible for his belief. It is difficult not to think that Butler knew this, although he avoids committing himself to an open use of the argument *ad terrorem*. Nor will any reservation make his theoretical assumption anything but a gross fallacy. There is no safe side in religion, for there is no experience to show where safety lies. To seek safety may, for aught we know, be the most dangerous, as it is certainly the most pusillanimous, of choices.

[1] *Analogy*, Part II., chap. vii., *sub fin.*

In the controversy between theology and rationalism it requires a greater effort of abstraction than most minds are capable of to grasp this possibility, and to appreciate its bearing on the aleatory method of belief. And as between Roman Catholicism and the various Protestant sects all doubt would vanish. The superior safety of belonging to the Church which alone claimed to monopolise the means of salvation was constantly urged as a motive for submitting to its pretensions, and proved, in fact, a most efficacious method of proselytism. Henry of Navarre is said to have put the argument in a particularly pointed form. The Protestant divines whom he consulted on the subject reluctantly admitted that he might be saved if he became a Catholic. The Catholic divines told him without hesitation that he would certainly be damned if he remained a Protestant. He therefore chose that side which, by universal agreement, offered the best prospect of escaping from perdition. What the great King had offered, more than half in irony, as an excuse for his politic apostasy was accepted in deadly earnest by many persons of quality in England under Charles I. as a reason for deserting the cause of the Reformation. Charles II.'s deathbed conversion was probably dictated by the same motive ; and, if so, it offers a crowning example of the adroit opportunism by which his whole life was guided. In this as in other respects the ablest of all the Stuarts bore a close resemblance to his grandfather, the ablest of the Bourbons. When Butler wrote the danger from Rome had greatly diminished, but had not wholly disappeared, as we learn from Neal's *History of the Puritans* (1732)

and Middleton's *Free Inquiry* (1747).[1] It is therefore rather surprising that he did not observe what consequences might be drawn from an argument, perhaps derived from Pascal, in favour of Pascal's creed.

If English churchmen did not draw the logical consequences of their greatest champion's apologetic method, their escape is due not only to the happy inconsistency of the theological intellect, but also to the pervasive influence of eighteenth-century rationalism, extending as it did far beyond the small circle of avowed freethinkers. Whatever else Englishmen might believe, their own Deists and the Voltairean movement abroad gradually convinced them that Popery was a superstition too absurd for even a Frenchman to accept—destined to speedy extinction, Horace Walpole thought, if the ill-advised abrogation of our penal laws had not given it a new lease of life. It would have surprised the dilettante of Strawberry Hill to hear that his own experiments in Gothic architecture had rather more to do with the dreaded revival of mediæval faith than the repeal of some obsolete statutes. Anyhow, by accident or otherwise, he proved a true prophet. Whether as grim wolf or good shepherd, two centuries after *Lycidas* Rome once more put in play the arts against which Milton had raised his warning voice. Or rather the natural magnetism exercised by the larger on the smaller body acted without the help of any direct proselytism on the part of Jesuits or others to disintegrate the Church of England and to draw

[1] The date of the *Analogy* is 1736.

its detached fragments into the central orb of Christendom.

Now it is interesting to note that in this process the method of Pascal and Butler played an important part, and was appealed to with confidence by both parties, by those who clung to the Via Media of Anglicanism and by those who scorned it as an illogical compromise between the right way and the wrong.

Cardinal Newman briefly refers to Butler's doctrine of probability as the guide of life as that whence his own theory of faith took its rise. Keble treats it at much greater length, and in particular connection with the issue on which he and his greater friend parted company in a very interesting but little read document, the preface to his *Sermons, Academical and Occasional,* published in 1847, soon after Newman's secession.

The principle in question is stated as follows: "In practical matters of eternal import, the safer way is always to be preferred, even though the excess of seeming evidence may tell in any degree on the opposite side. Thus, if one mode of acting imply that there is an eternity and another contradict it.....the tremendous, overwhelming interest at stake ought to determine a man's conduct to the affirmative side. He should act, in spite of seeming evidence, as if eternity were true."[1]

Keble had not the same lingering regard for truth as such that still distinguished Butler; and the context clearly shows that "acting" means not merely conformity to Christian ethics, but also that

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

adhesion to the Catholic creed which, in the supposed circumstances, some, among whom the present writer is one, would call, in plain language, cowardly and deceitful.

Fortunately, or rather inevitably, systematised immorality is suicidal; and a recent incident has reminded us that when sailors fall into a panic they are apt to fire into their own ships.[1] Keble very frankly admits that "the principles of Butler and Pascal" cannot be limited to "the controversy with unbelievers."[2] And if personally he had been disposed so to limit them, Newman would not have allowed him to stop short. So he proceeds to state the argument for going over to Rome in terms which I shall not transcribe, as they are substantially identical with the Bourbon argument (white plume argument, let us call it) already quoted.

Keble's way of getting out of it is amazing, and practically amounts to an abandonment of the whole principle. It is that "the argument put in this form proves too much, for it would equally show that Puritanism or Mahometanism, or the ancient Donatism, or any other exclusive system, is the safer way."[3] And he also goes on to remark, rather late in the day, that there seems to be something "cold and ungenerous" about the method—in short, what we call mean. Accordingly, it is to be reserved for the exclusive benefit of unbelievers,

[1] The reference is to the Dogger Bank incident of October 22nd, 1904, when Admiral Rozhdestvensky mistook the Hull trawlers for Japanese torpedo-boats. On that occasion some of the Russian ships are reported to have suffered from the misdirected fire of their consorts.

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 7, 8.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 14.

and not mentioned in controversies among Christians. But we have seen that as against unbelievers the probabilist method is quite invalid. When the factor of inscrutable and irresponsible omnipotence has been introduced into our calculations the adoption of one particular alternative becomes no more advisable than the adoption of another. Whatever creed we profess or reject, the chances of our being saved or lost remain precisely equal. For a Being who is morally capable of damning us at all is capable of damning us for taking him at his word. Nor has the orthodox believer any right to charge those who advance such an argument with irreverence or flippancy. To the God whose existence he assumes their reasoning may appear perfectly reverent and serious.

Pascal's method was destined to one more singular development before it silently took its place among the obsolete weapons of religious controversy. With the collapse of the Tractarian Movement the rationalistic movement which it had temporarily arrested returned in a flood, and before many years had passed became predominant at Oxford, at least among her more serious and intellectual residents. To meet this new danger Mansel delivered his famous Bampton Lectures in 1858. He does not, I think, ever mention the argument *ad terrorem*, but he follows Pascal in denying that our moral distinctions are applicable to the proceedings of an infinite Being about whose real nature we are totally ignorant; and he follows Butler in contending that every other system is open to as many objections as Christianity, or rather as his own particular version of Christianity.

Mansel was hailed by his admirers as a second Butler; but the reception of his work by the intellectual public generally showed that such methods had passed out of date. I question whether, in the controversy that it provoked, a single name of distinction is to be found on his side. Against him were such writers as F. D. Maurice, James Martineau, R. H. Hutton, and Professor Goldwin Smith. Herbert Spencer, accepting his premises, pushed them to the length of an Agnosticism which absolutely excluded belief in revealed religion, and reduced natural religion to the most attenuated of abstractions. But the most resounding stroke of all came from John Stuart Mill. In the course of his destructive attack on the philosophy of Mansel's teacher, Sir William Hamilton, the great thinker and moralist, then at the very height of his fame and power, turned aside to tear up the flimsy pretences under which the Bampton Lecturer on the *Limits of Religious Thoughts* had attempted to eliminate morality from religion. Pascal is not named; but here at last Pascal's method receives its final quietus. Convince me, says Mill, that the world is ruled by an infinite Being of whom I know nothing except that his proceedings are incompatible with the highest human morality, "and I will bear my fate as I may. But there is one thing he shall not do: he shall not compel me to worship him. I will call no being good who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow creatures; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go."[1]

[1] *Examination of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy*, p. 124 (3rd ed.).

Mansel sneeringly forbore "to comment on the temper and taste of this declamation."[1] But what he said or did not say mattered equally little. The ghastly idol had fallen and fallen forever.

It has been said by some who are in full sympathy with Mill's contention that the sentiment here expressed, however admirable, is irreconcilable with his utilitarian ethics. I am not so sure of that. The moral degradation of worshipping an omnipotent demon through eternity might conceivably be more painful than any punishment in the demon's power to inflict. Or, on finding himself defied, he might "tak' a thought and men'"— to the great increase of the general felicity. But there seems a sort of pedantry about such considerations. If the supreme ironies are partly serious, supreme seriousness may well be a little ironical. There is such a phrase as "I bet you all to nothing," and as the language of the gaming-table has once been introduced it may here be appropriately used as best describing Mill's position. There is no more than an infinitesimally small chance that Mansel's non-moral theology may be true; but neither on that chance nor on any other will a high-principled human soul forfeit its self-respect.

My object has been to show that to incur either intellectual or moral degradation on a calculation of selfish interest would be not only mean, but unavailing. For with the limitation of our knowledge assumed by the theologians who appeal to such motives there is no safe side, the chances

[1] *Philosophy of the Conditioned*, p. 168.

either way being precisely equal whatever attitude towards the hidden arbiter of our destiny we assume. It remains, then, that our conduct should be determined by considerations equally applicable whether the supernatural does or does not exist.

BUCKLE AND THE ECONOMICS OF KNOWLEDGE

It seems at first sight like a satire on the teaching of Henry Thomas Buckle that, nearly twenty years after his death,[1] public interest should be more attracted by the pettiest details of his personal life than by the intellectual achievements but for which those details would never have been recorded, or, had they been recorded, would never have been studied. It might be urged that this was just the sort of gossip from which he desired to set history free, and to substitute for it an inquiry into the general laws by which men's actions in their totality are determined. Yet many of these details strikingly illustrate a peculiar and neglected aspect of his philosophy. For he held that moral and affectional motives are all-powerful with the individual, although exercising an inappreciable influence on masses of men acting together. Accordingly he considered that much which ought not to find a place in history might very properly be relegated to biography, regarding the latter, indeed, as not susceptible of scientific treatment. His life, then, if it does not verify his entire philosophy, at least does not contradict it. It may also be taken as confirming and deepening the personal impression made long ago on his more sympathetic readers. There are passages in the *History of Civilisation*

[1] Written in 1880.

which show plainly enough that Buckle was full of deep tenderness and ardent enthusiasm. But without Mr. Huth's biography[1] we should not have known how thoroughly good a man he was. Every page exhibits him to us as a genial companion, a judicious adviser, a devoted friend. But we learn little more about his peculiar cast of intellect than that he had a memory even greater, if possible, than Macaulay's. For the rest, nothing that Mr. Huth has published tends to elucidate the causes, whether general or special, which made his philosophy what it was. Fortunately, however, the information required for that purpose is easily accessible. Next after his country, parentage, and early associations, Buckle's true antecedents and environment are to be found in the school of thought to which for the most part he belonged. The object of this essay is to show what tendencies he represented, and in what particular directions he attempted to work them out.

The English thought of the last half century, so far as it is really English and not a revival of old dogmas or an importation from the Continent, has been, under its most general aspect, a philosophy of freedom, individuality, spontaneity, experimentalism. Foreign observers often take it, superficially enough, for mere empiricism—the fit expression of a national character which they persist in regarding as narrow, selfish, and materialistic, incapable of wide ideas or of lofty aspirations. That such a people should also have created the richest poetic literature of modern times is an anomaly which

[1] *Life of T. H. Buckle.* By Alfred Henry Huth. Two vols. London, 1880.

they do not feel called upon to explain. Perhaps a little reflection would show them that our art and our philosophy, so far from being opposed, are products of the same imaginative genius working in different directions. It would then be understood that, if we appeal to experience, the enlargement and not the limitation of knowledge is what we have most at heart; and that our utilitarianism is not the substitution of a low for a high standard, but of a progressive for a stationary, a social for a personal morality. Moreover, the English habit of individual liberty combines with the restless English imagination in leading our foremost minds to adopt whatever abstract theories offer the widest scope to spontaneity, to freedom of enterprise, to variety of choice. It was his thorough comprehension of this tendency and the consistent manner in which he brought it to bear on speculation that qualified John Stuart Mill to be for so many years the leader of English thought. His *Essay on Liberty* only expresses more briefly and clearly the fundamental aim of his larger works, which was to show that existing beliefs and customs, resting as they did on experience, might be superseded by a wider experience. He has told us himself that this was the aim of his *Logic;* and the drift of his *Political Economy* is evidently to exalt as much as possible the part played by free and conscious human agency in the distribution of wealth. That the system of Herbert Spencer is from beginning to end a philosophy of liberty and individualism need only be stated to be perceived. We know from his own declaration that the whole series of works composing it were

undertaken with a view to its ethical conclusion, and we know also that his ethical ideal is a society where the component parts interfere to the least possible extent with one another. Thinkers of a more limited scope are dominated by a similar tendency. Charles Darwin has, so to speak, projected the experimental method into nature, and shown that it is the condition not only of scientific progress, but of all vital progress whatever. Spontaneous variation and natural selection correspond exactly to repeated trial and failure followed by eventual success; and among animals also those families prosper most where there is most diversity developed—in other words, where originality is least trammeled. The same idea is present in Alexander Bain's theory of voluntary action, which offers a parallel to Darwin's theory of organic evolution the more remarkable from its having been worked out before the latter was published. According to it, all sorts of movements are spontaneously set up by young creatures, and only those muscular combinations survive in memory that experience proves to be associated with pleasurable feeling, or with relief from painful feeling. Another instance of the prominence given to experimental freedom by English thought is the place which Stanley Jevons assigns to hypothesis in his *Principles of Science,* particularly in the chapter on "The Character of the Experimentalist," where it is very clearly explained that scientific discoveries are not made by divination, but by repeated guesses, most of which are utterly wrong. The two greatest works of modern English historical literature, Grote's *Greece* and Macaulay's

England, are both, but the former more especially, pleadings in favour of political liberty. Even those writers who, like Carlyle and Ruskin, on the whole approve of despotism rather than of democracy cannot avoid doing homage to the English spirit. For the attraction of arbitrary power to Carlyle was that it enabled exceptionally gifted individuals to carry out their designs without let or hindrance; and Ruskin protests against machinery because it destroys the personality of the workman, his free initiative and spontaneous energy. Even the breezy criticism of Matthew Arnold may be mentioned in this connection as a help to the emancipation of thought from routine methods and from party ties. Finally, the English Positivists, while accepting a Continental philosophy, distinguished for its animosity to many forms of liberty, are so far faithful to the traditions of their own country as to lay special emphasis on that part of Comte's doctrine which demands the liberation of the spiritual from the temporal power.

This general tendency of English thought was most fully accepted by Buckle. As a writer, love of liberty was his ruling passion; as a philosopher, the idea of liberty was the centre of his system. Although a devoted student, he preferred it even to knowledge.

> Liberty [he exclaims] is the one thing most essential to the right development of mind and to the real grandeur of nations. It is a product of knowledge where knowledge advances in a healthy and regular manner; but if, under certain unhappy circumstances, it is opposed by what seems to be knowledge, in God's name let knowledge perish and liberty be preserved. Liberty is not a means to an end, it is an end itself. To

> secure it, to enlarge it, and to diffuse it should be the main object of all social arrangements and of all political contrivances.[1]

But the necessity for choosing between knowledge and liberty was not likely to present itself to him in a practical form. Each was conducive to the other; each in its way was a realisation of mind, an expression of inward spontaneous energy. He conceived that the love of knowledge was, equally with the love of wealth, inherent in man, and was adequate to the production of all progress when allowed free play by the presence of favourable material conditions and the absence of artificial restraints. This notion was, in truth, a generalisation from his own peculiar circumstances. The elder Buckle had been engaged in business, and had bequeathed a competence to his son which enabled the latter to devote his whole time to intellectual pursuits. Although averse from office-work, he kept up the traditions of business and carried them into philosophy. Political Economy supplied a natural connection between the basis and the superstructure of his existence. From that science as from a centre all his other studies branched out, and from it he borrowed the method by which they were arranged. It was, then, quite natural that he should look on Adam Smith as the greatest man that Scotland had ever produced, and on the *Wealth of Nations* as the most important book ever published. He himself aspired to be the Adam Smith of a still more comprehensive science, and to found the Economics of Knowledge.

[1] *Miscellaneous Writings*, I., 44-45.

Buckle's opinions were formed at a time when *laisser-faire* was the undisputed law of political economy, and his early manhood coincided with the stirring period of agitation for free trade—an agitation in which we are told that the young student was intensely interested. Thus at a very early period his speculations were biassed by a strong prejudice against governmental interference; and his plan for extending the laws of wealth to knowledge required that something analogous to the protective system should be discovered in the intellectual sphere. This is why Buckle tries to bring bad government of every kind under the heading of protectionism, and why he looks on churches in particular as associations invested with a kind of speculative monopoly, to the great detriment of scientific industry. Anti-clerical rather than anti-theological, his attitude is, in this respect, exactly the reverse of that taken up by Auguste Comte, who highly approved of ecclesiastical organisation, but wished to utilise it for a new sort of teaching.

But, over a large part of the globe, human intelligence had to contend with an even more formidable enemy than the protective spirit—an enemy, indeed, to whom the unconquerable pertinacity of that spirit was, in most instances, due. Such was the point of view from which Buckle regarded Nature. He speaks of her as carrying on a perpetual warfare with man, sometimes victorious, sometimes vanquished, but always tending to thwart and drag him back to her own level. It is astonishing that one who formulated this fundamental antithesis so sharply, and who in

other respects has so frequently expressed his adhesion to the popular metaphysics of the 'fifties, should ever have been charged with materialism. A notion has somehow gained currency that Buckle proposed to deduce the history of every country from its physical geography. Nothing could well be more unlike the truth. He distinctly marks off the regions where, in his phraseology, nature was subordinated to man from those where man was subordinated to nature ; and it was with the former that, as a historian of civilisation, he was almost exclusively concerned. The idea that human beings and human societies are themselves natural products had apparently never occurred to him. This, however, was not for want of acquaintance with the theory of evolution, the basis of which he had fully accepted. Writing some years before the appearance of the *Origin of Species,* he alludes to fixity of species as an "old dogma" on which successful attacks had already been made ;[1] and in the same passage he assumes that phenomena of every order have always been determined by their own laws without any interference from without. But he was averse from accepting the absolute dependence of mind on brain, nor could he well have done so consistently with his passionate faith in its immortality. Hence his scornful doubt that the human mind could be handed down like an heirloom ;[2] his opinion that the intellectual and moral faculties do not improve ; and his deliberate

[1] *History of Civilisation in England,* Vol. I., p. 806, *note.* The references throughout this essay are to the original edition in two volumes.

[2] *Miscellaneous Writings,* I., 17.

omission of race from the physical conditions which a historian has to consider. Even where he does admit physical influences they are of a very indirect character, and they are just those which would be picked out by the economist and the literary student rather than by the physiologist. Nature wars against political liberty by producing over-population, and so enabling landlords and capitalists to concentrate all power in their own hands. She wars against intellectual liberty by the multiplication of extraordinary and terrifying phenomena which stimulate the imagination at the expense of the understanding. Buckle seems to have confounded an originally rapid rate of increase in population with its final increase up to or beyond the limit of subsistence. Over-population is theoretically possible under any conditions of climate, food, and soil; and it is not necessarily involved in one rate of increase more than in another. The existence of vast plains isolated from the rest of the world, whether fertile or barren, seems a likelier cause of despotism than any other that can be named; while, conversely, whatever geographical circumstances are favourable to the development of several independent national centres, near enough for active intercourse with each other, but protected by natural frontiers against mutual aggression, and similarly situated with regard to the world at large—such regions, in short, as Greece, the basin of the Mediterranean, and Western Europe generally—are also favourable to liberty. It would seem also that the aspects of nature have much less to do with superstitious beliefs than Buckle supposed. For such beliefs were originally diffused over the whole

earth under very similar forms; they have not remained constantly associated with awe-inspiring scenery; and where such an association does exist, as for instance in South America or the East Indies, it can be better explained by difficulty of communication with the centres of enlightenment than by any direct influence exercised on the imagination.

My object, however, is not so much to criticise Buckle's views as to show in what modes of thought they originated. And here we have a remarkable verification of the guiding principle laid down at starting. Following the true English method, our philosopher construes universal history, not as an organically connected whole, but as a great collection of spontaneous experiments on the possibility of human progress. Mind is scattered broadcast over the whole earth, but in only a few instances does it meet with conditions favourable to its development. Everywhere outside Europe civilisation has been arrested, either because wealth could not be accumulated at all, or because it could not be diffused so widely among the masses as to enable them to understand and act on the ideas put forward by men of genius. In Europe a new set of forces, historical instead of geographical, come into play, and a series of eliminations bring us at last to England as the only country where mind has been able to manifest its inherent powers of expansion on a scale wide enough to furnish materials for determining the natural law of all progress. By an equally ingenious train of reasoning Guizot proves that civilisation can best be studied in France; a country which Auguste Comte, on quite different grounds, also erects into

the normal type of intellectual evolution. No doubt the patriotic bias spoken of by Herbert Spencer has something to do with these preferences; but a deeper reason will be found in the character impressed on every philosophy by the social conditions under which it is framed. A thinker who translates the ideas of his own nation into abstract formulæ will naturally find that this same nation best satisfies the requirements of his particular system. He may even extend the method to particular periods, and imagine that the world was never so enlightened as when his theory of what it ought to be first became fixed.

Besides his patriotic feelings, there was probably another strong motive which induced Buckle to select a single country for the application of his new method. This was the desire to simplify the hypothetical science of history, which, but for some such artifice, threatened to become unmanageably complex and difficult. The same consideration throws some light on his celebrated rejection of morality as a factor in the progress of civilisation. None of the author's theories provoked so much hostile criticism at the time of their first publication, nor were any of them supported by such weak and inconsistent arguments. It will perhaps be worth while to glance at the principal assumptions which those arguments involve. They are as follows: (1) The innate moral dispositions do not change; (2) Moral truth is not progressive; (3) Innate disposition and knowledge between them account for the whole of moral conduct; (4) Moral forces exercise no great or lasting effect on human affairs. Of these four propositions three are refuted

by the history of slavery alone. It was not always known that slavery is wrong, nor, in fact, was it always wrong; the perception of its iniquity was made more active by religious feeling; and its abolition was in great part due to the excitement thus produced. With regard to the alleged stationariness of the innate moral dispositions—by which term of course nothing more than sympathy need be implied—everything goes to prove that on the average civilised children are born with a better nature than savage children, or than their own remote ancestors. It is, however, conceivable that, conceding the existence of moral progress, more may have been done for human happiness by purely intellectual progress. One great example of a benefit due entirely to the latter is, according to Buckle, the comparative infrequency of war in modern times. His argument is a perfect nest of fallacies. The stimulus given to war by intellectual causes, such as individual genius and the adoption of new beliefs by whole nations or sections of nations, is entirely ignored. It is taken for granted that the invention of gunpowder localised the military spirit in a separate class and thereby weakened it, whereas the localisation seems to have been greater before gunpowder came into general use;[1] nor was it likely that war should become less popular when its risks were confined to a particular class than when they were shared by the whole community. That national quarrels are discouraged by the diffusion of sound economical doctrine is doubtless true; but the false doctrines

[1] See Macaulay's Essay on Machiavelli.

from which those quarrels formerly sprang were equally intellectual forces, only made possible by a great development of reflection. Buckle gives as a reason for neglecting the influence of legislation on progress, that the best laws are those which have been passed for the repeal of bad ones; he does not consider how easily the same argument might be turned against his own favourite theory of social dynamics—a remark which applies equally to that other great intellectual triumph, the decline of religious persecution. For, so far, it is the most intellectual religions that have been the most intolerant; and modern thought in winning liberty has only won back what ancient thought enjoyed everywhere except at Athens. Nor is this all. Another influence adverse to war is, we are told, the great increase of travelling due to the extension of locomotion by steam. Different nations are brought into closer contact with one another, their mutual esteem is thereby increased, and their hostile feelings are proportionately diminished. Now, what is this mutual esteem if not a moral motive, brought into play, indeed, by intellect, but itself the determining antecedent? And, to make the self-contradiction worse, we learn that the reason why men's respect for each other grows with their mutual intimacy is that the good in human nature considerably outweighs the bad. If so, what becomes of the position that virtue and vice exactly balance and neutralise each other's effects?

Apart, however, from these obvious objections, there is a deeper objection to the theory, which, so far as I know, has never yet been pointed out—

namely, the indistinctness of the whole antithesis between moral and intellectual laws. Buckle saw clearly enough that duty is partly a matter of knowledge, without seeing that all knowledge must, as such, be intellectual ; and he altogether failed to observe that the pursuit of science must equally, as a mode of action, come under moral laws. A life's devotion to the pursuit of truth demands no inconsiderable amount of temperance and courage ; while candour in dealing with the opinions of others, and readiness to test one's own opinions thoroughly, imply a degree of fairness and disinterestedness not inferior to that which may be displayed in the performance of any other duty.

In estimating the influence of religion, literature, and government on civilisation, Buckle finds his task greatly simplified by the previous elimination of morality ; the immediate effects of these three agents (to which art should have been added as a fourth) being exercised on action rather than on knowledge ; while, again, the consciousness that morality depends upon such complex conditions was a further motive for leaving it out of account altogether. Yet even so the questions raised in this connection are most inadequately treated in the chapter specially devoted to them. So far as literature is concerned, Buckle himself subsequently took up a totally different position, expatiating eloquently on the stimulus which poetry gives to scientific discovery, and on the importance of keeping the intellect in perpetual contact with the emotions ;[1] for which purpose, as need hardly be

[1] II., p. 502.

observed, literature is our most valuable auxiliary. His remarks on this head remind us of what Professor Tyndall has since said; and a little farther reflection might have led him to anticipate what the same authority has stated with respect to the moral basis of intellectual work.

Such considerations would, however, have been inconsistent with that thoroughgoing parallelism between knowledge and wealth, between logic and political economy, which our author was bent on establishing; for the laws of material industry, as he had learnt them, were completely dissociated from morality and from disinterested emotion. It is not a little curious that two other English thinkers, Darwin and Herbert Spencer, should almost simultaneously have been carrying economic principles, the one into zoology, and the other into all philosophy. For the "struggle for existence" is avowedly based on the Malthusian law of population; and the formula of evolution grew out of an attempt to place the doctrine of *laisser-faire* on a truly scientific foundation. Buckle uses both principles, although on a much more limited scale; he explains the tropical civilisations, as we have already seen, by the advantage which an unrestricted multiplication of human beings gave to land and capital over labour; he explains the European civilisations as a constant struggle between governmental interference and the natural development of intellect; and we shall presently see that he forces deduction and induction into an analogy with the production and distribution of wealth.

It sometimes happens that a philosopher errs,

not by following his own ideas too far, but by not following them far enough; and I cannot help thinking that Buckle would have been better inspired had he pushed his parallel one step further, and introduced the theory of exchange into his intellectual economics. He would then have seen that the importation of knowledge from one country into another is the very condition of its progress; that for the community as well as for the individual isolation means death; that no nation, however gifted, can subsist on its own mental stores; and that truth acquires an altogether new power when transferred to a fresh soil. He would not then have held that the laws of intellectual or any other progress are best ascertained by studying their action in a country secluded, so far as possible, from external interference. And he would also, perhaps, have perceived that the decay of the great tropical and sub-tropical civilisations arose partly from this very seclusion, partly from the reaction of the barbarism by which they were surrounded on every side, entailing as it did an ever-increasing preponderance of the military spirit, together with a crushing burden of taxation within. As it is, he unconsciously bore witness to the truth whose full force he failed to recognise. England, which he declares to be the one country least affected by foreign influences, does in reality owe much of her intellectual greatness to those very influences. The circumstance that we did not formerly travel much abroad for pleasure, or receive many visitors from the European Continent, is comparatively insignificant. We traded round the world; we received

books, inventions, discoveries, and ideas from all quarters.

When Buckle began to write the Renaissance had not yet attracted the universal attention it was destined to receive a few years after his death; still, its immense importance in the life of reason had already been pointed out before his time, and no one can now[1] help noticing what a void is produced by its total absence from the pages of this historian. He seems to think that, towards the close of the sixteenth century, men suddenly, and for no particular reason except the negative one of ecclesiastical decay, began doubting what they had hitherto believed, and that modern enlightenment sprang as spontaneously from their doubts. The truth is that they questioned one set of beliefs because they had become familiarised with another and contradictory set, embodied in the classic literature of Greece and Rome. Nor was the intellectual life of England dependent only for its first awakening on an external stimulus; it was sustained through the whole seventeenth century by continual contact with the minds of other nations; while no sooner was their influence partially withdrawn, as happened in the eighteenth century, than it fell into a speedy decline. Buckle has noticed the dearth of speculative genius which followed the deaths of Locke and Newton, but he has failed adequately to explain it. Curiously enough, too, the explanation which he does offer is inconsistent with his own principles. According to him, it arose from the diversion of the national genius

[1] Written in 1880.

partly into practical pursuits, partly into political contests.[1] Here, then, are two most serious disturbances, totally unconnected with the protective spirit, not allowed for in his general philosophy of history, and all the more dangerous that they are likely to gain instead of losing strength with advancing civilisation. That, however, he exaggerates their effect during the period referred to will become evident when we consider how much greater their activity has since become, without proving incompatible with a brilliant revival of science and philosophy. If we ask what was the cause of that revival, Buckle will himself supply us with the answer. He attributes it first to the influence of the Scotch school, and then to the "sudden admiration for German literature of which Coleridge was the principal exponent."[2] Only prejudice could have prevented him from acknowledging our obligations to France as well.

When we turn to other countries, Buckle furnishes fresh evidence of the same truth—the intellectual interdependence of nations. He tells us that France, enervated by the despotism of Louis XIV., was only saved by a wholesale importation of English ideas; and that the German intellect was raised to an even abnormal activity by contact with those eminent Frenchmen who flocked to the court of Frederic the Great.[3] English and Greek literature had, by the way, much more to do with that extraordinary fermentation than Maupertuis and his colleagues; but, as Buckle unhappily did not live to sketch the history of

[1] I., p. 808. [2] *Ibid*, p. 809. [3] P. 217.

German thought, I need not press the point. Another striking illustration is offered by the history of Spain. Nothing in his whole work is more interesting than those condensed and vivid pages in which Buckle shows how, after having been brought to the lowest ebb of misery by her priesthood and her government, that unhappy country was restored to something of her former prosperity by the efforts of a foreign dynasty. Yet, strange to say, he seizes on this opportunity to push home the lesson that "no progress is real unless it is spontaneous."[1] That Spain temporarily fell back from the position won for her by Charles III. may be true enough. But did she become again what she had been a century before? And has she made no progress since then? The revolution of 1868 was, comparatively speaking, a failure, as indeed the revolutions of England and France at first seemed to be also; but at any rate it revealed the existence of a sceptical feeling diffused through the entire Spanish nation, and an utter decay of the old loyalty, which, according to our philosopher, are the most essential requisites of progress; and this scepticism, whatever may be its value, is altogether an importation from France and Germany—in other words, it results from a movement first set on foot by the reforming zeal of the Bourbons. The derivation of Scotch philosophy from England and France is not noticed, although the influence of France at least had already been pointed out by Carlyle in his essay on Burns.[2]

[1] II., p. 99.

[2] In one passage Buckle speaks of "that interchange of ideas which is likely to become the most important regulator of

The preference shown by Buckle for home-grown over imported knowledge may have been suggested by Adam Smith's analogous preference of agriculture to manufactures, and of native industry to foreign trade. But when he declares the protective spirit in Church and State to be the great enemy of intellectual progress, and therefore of all civilisation, the very form of the expression places its economical derivation beyond a doubt. Here he is quite at home, and here his whole soul is thrown into the work. The polemic against protection occupies the larger portion of his history, and it was this that won for it such a far-reaching and resonant success. From a literary point of view that success was well deserved. I, at least, know of nothing in any work of the kind marked by such intense, sustained, victorious passion—the passion without which, as Hegel says, nothing great can be achieved, and which, in this instance, is rendered more formidable by the imposing array of facts brought up to support it at every step. To us of the present generation Buckle's words have a more individual distinctness and a more immediate interest than to his own contemporaries. For, since they were written, there has been a revival of the protective spirit under a new form, and in many quarters it is proposed that the old authoritative methods should be used to consolidate and extend reforms initiated by very different means. Endowment of research, endowment of Catholic professorships, compulsory education, compulsory

European affairs" (I., p. 223). But he omits to notice that it has always been their most important regulator.

temperance, compulsory thrift, interference with freedom of contract, and Socialistic velleities of every kind—these are but the various parts of a system against which Buckle, had he lived, would have protested not less energetically than Herbert Spencer.[1] It behoves us then to examine with especial care the arguments by which his thesis is supported, and the historical examples by which he has endeavoured to verify them.

The protective spirit, as has been already observed, is twofold. It may either interfere with men's actions, or with their beliefs, or with both. In France it chiefly took the direction of political tutelage, in Scotland of ecclesiastical intolerance, in Spain of both combined; the consequence being that in the last-named country progress was completely arrested, while in the other two it has been irregular and unhealthy. The French Revolution was a reaction against the protective spirit, and its destructive violence was due to the rigour of the repression which provoked it. Few liberal thinkers will deny that Buckle's criticisms on the past and present condition of the countries just enumerated contain a large amount of truth. It is quite another question whether the wide generalisations founded on his historical survey are equally to be trusted. To begin with, it seems to me that the assumption of a fixed antithesis between the people and their rulers is eminently misleading. A country may be governed by a foreign race, possibly for its own good, but at any rate without its own consent

[1] Written in 1880, when the agitation against Free Trade was only just beginning.

or co-operation, like India at the present moment; or again it may be dominated by a priesthood sprung from its own ranks and speaking its own language, but to all intents and purposes the soldiers of an alien power, and quite out of sympathy with its real opinions; but apart from these exceptions every government is really representative, even when it is not created by the popular vote, and merely gives a sharper expression to the collective will or to the prevalent beliefs of the people. Sometimes the rulers will be a little in advance of their subjects, and sometimes a little behind them; but, to use a favourite formula of our author's, deviations in one direction will be compensated by deviations in another. Here the government will be too interfering, and there too remiss; but in either case the error will be attended by counterbalancing advantages; and probably each nation will have something to learn from the other. Everywhere there will be obstacles to progress; but they will arise far more from the natural inertia of the human mind, varying with race and geographical position, than from the distribution and application of political power; and they will equally affect all classes of society.

Again, Buckle seems to confound under the common name of political protection five distinct ideas: (1) Despotism of any kind; (2) the concentration of power in a few hands; (3) the favouring of one class at the expense of others; (4) interference with individuals for their own good; and (5) the feeling of personal loyalty towards a hereditary chief. He even goes so far as to identify what is called a paternal government with a

"government in which supreme power is vested in the sovereign or in a few privileged classes."[1] Yet surely the government of Turkey is not paternal; nor is the development of democracy unfavourable to benevolent interference with private interests, as the present tendency of legislation in England proves. Buckle also associates economic protection with political absolutism and centralisation, although in the United States it flourishes under conditions the very reverse of these; while only a few years after the publication of his first volume free-trade was imposed on France by a despotic ruler.

Undoubtedly there are countries where the principle of authority is highly developed, and others where it is restricted within very narrow limits; but to say that the former are necessarily animated by a spirit unfavourable to scientific progress is probably more than Buckle would have ventured to assert in so many words; although, on putting his various expressions together, this is the only interpretation that they will stand. Yet it is notorious that science has received great encouragement from many absolute rulers both in ancient and modern times. In France it made great progress under the old *régime*. In Germany it has co-existed with a complete absence of political freedom. Perhaps he would have held that mere knowledge was an insufficient return for the sacrifice of individualism and spontaneity; but we have only to deal with his clear and categorical assertions—(1) "that the progress of mankind

[1] I., p. 557.

depends on the success with which the laws of phenomena are investigated, and on the extent to which a knowledge of these laws is diffused"; and (2) "that the great enemy of this movement is the protective spirit."[1] Now, I maintain that, whatever else the history of France proves, it does not prove the second of these propositions. Let us consider what arguments it suggests to Buckle. He does not, indeed, discuss the endowment of research put in practice on a large scale by Louis XIV., but he censures the encouragement given to literature by that monarch on grounds which, if they are worth anything, must equally apply to science. As usual, the principles invoked are purely economic. We are told that—

> Every nation which is allowed to pursue its course uncontrolled will easily satisfy the wants of its own intellect, and will produce such a literature as is best suited to its actual condition. And it is evidently for the interest of all classes that the production shall not be greater than the want—that the supply shall not exceed the demand. It is, moreover, necessary to the well-being of society that a healthy proportion should be kept up between the intellectual classes and the practical classes. It is necessary that there should be a certain ratio between those who are most inclined to think and those who are most inclined to act. If we were all authors, our material interests would suffer; if we were all men of business, our mental pleasures would be abridged. In the first case, we should be famished philosophers; in the other case, we should be wealthy fools. Now, it is obvious that, according to the commonest principles of human action, the relative numbers of these two classes will be adjusted, without effort, by the natural, or, as we call it, the spontaneous, movement of society.[2]

[1] II., p. 1.

[2] I., pp. 628–29.

The obvious fallacy lies in supposing that literature is useless when those who are engaged in its production cannot live on the sale of their works. The idea of doing anything for posterity is quite ignored. And we are vainly left to imagine how the book-market is to provide needy philosophers not only with the necessaries of life, but also with the instruments of research, such as libraries, observatories, laboratories, and collections of natural objects, in the absence of state-aid, and even of private munificence, for that, too, must be excluded if we are to apply the law of supply and demand with complete consistency. To suppose that such aid, even when granted on a liberal scale, would impoverish the rest of the community is absurd, especially when we consider how largely scientific discoveries contribute to the national wealth. Nor can it be contended that the energies of scientific men are weakened by the receipt of public assistance (as those of other producers might be), so long as it does not exceed their real wants. Had our author lived to write his promised sketch of American civilisation, he would perhaps have found that the want of accumulated knowledge—which, according to him, is a serious obstacle to the progress of the United States—may be traced to a want of endowments for the support of learning in that country.[1]

Buckle, however, in the chapter to which I have been referring, evades the real issue by speaking at one time as if the interests of science or philosophy were identical with those of literature, and

[1] I., pp. 220–21. It will be understood that the reference is to a state of things existing fifty years ago.

at another time as if the two were opposed. The former view is expressed in the passage just quoted, the latter in his subsequent arguments. We are told that Louis XIV., by encouraging art and poetry, arrested the great intellectual movement which had been in progress before his accession to power. It may be doubted whether any courtier ever attributed such omnipotence to a monarch as this republican historian. Here, again, an economical analogy is falsely applied. Because capital can be readily transferred from one employment to another, it does not follow that the same is true of brains. It is, indeed, evident from the facts furnished by Buckle himself that, before Louis XIV. assumed the direction of affairs, the French intellect was already executing the evolution ascribed to his mischievous interference with the natural course of thought. For "the poets, dramatists, painters, musicians, sculptors, architects, were, with hardly an exception, not only born, but educated, under that freer policy which existed before his time."[1] *A fortiori,* their career must have been already decided before his majority. That epochs of scientific and of artistic excellence should alternate with one another is, in truth, a regular law of history; and the same phenomenon has repeated itself at other periods when the cause, whatever it may be, evidently lay deeper than the vicissitudes of Court favour. It is another question whether the intellectual sterility which marked the latter half of Louis's reign is to be attributed to the protective system. Looking at our own Victorian age as it

[1] I., p. 648.

now is, compared with what it was twenty years ago, and at the present wretched state of French literature as compared with the generation of 1830, I am inclined to think that here also we are in presence of some mysterious rhythm, according to which many more great writers are born at one time than at another.[1]

Passing from the protective spirit in politics to the protective spirit in theology, I must again call attention to the confusion of ideas lurking under a style of exemplary clearness. The somewhat heterogeneous forces represented by clericalism, asceticism, intolerance, and superstition are lumped together under a single heading; while the last of these terms is sometimes used to denote supernatural beliefs lying outside theology, and sometimes any amount of supernaturalism going beyond Buckle's own theistic creed. Sometimes the clergy are dangerous because they teach certain doctrines; at other times the doctrines are only dangerous because of the authority which they give to an organised class whose interests are opposed to progress. Sometimes the study of theology is attacked as a waste of power, because theology deals with subjects not admitting of any certain information; at other times because it propounds theories inconsistent with experience. Under cover of such ambiguities, the Scotch and the Germans are equally spoken of as being more superstitious than the English; although most of the faults with which Scotland is reproached are present in England to a considerable extent, and not present at all in

[1] Things have got much worse since the above was written. Compare the concluding chapter of my *Modern England*.

Germany. Moreover, the evils indiscriminately associated with the protective spirit in theology, so far from being always combined, are often found to be inconsistent with one another. Asceticism is not the rule of established Churches, but of those religious teachers who are thrown for their support on the voluntary contributions of the people. It is also notorious that the latter class, precisely because they are not protected—that is to say, not educated at the public expense, nor admitted to the society of the higher orders—are generally distinguished by the greater illiberality of their sentiments. Again, a real theology, however largely intermixed with error it may be, is widely removed from the mere popular and spontaneous superstitions with which Buckle habitually confounds it, by the systematic cohesion of its dogmas, and by the severe intellectual effort implied on the part of those whose duty it is to assimilate and to defend them. It is no accident that so many *savants* should be the children of Protestant clergymen, and that so many philosophers should have been theological students in their youth. Even as a formidable enemy, Catholicism may have rendered valuable services to freethought, by nerving its advocates to the most strenuous efforts, and obliging them to find counter-solutions for the great problems to which the Church had already provided an answer. Buckle knew well that industry does not attain its highest development in regions where the wants of life are most easily supplied. He might have inferred from that significant circumstance that the intellectual energies gain fresh strength from the obstacles against which they contend. It would have been

worthy of an English philosopher to point out that in the intellectual sphere also competition is needed to secure efficiency; that great thought has always been aggressive and defiant; and that the weakening of its antagonist may dangerously react upon itself.

After considering the causes by which knowledge is impeded, we pass to its own laws, to the conditions under which it is extended. Here the analogy between intellectual and industrial economics, which throughout has been our guide, is completed. We are taught to consider knowledge, like wealth, under the two heads of accumulation and diffusion. By the former progress is made possible; by the latter it is actually effected. Had Buckle been really, what so many writers fancy he was, a disciple of Auguste Comte, he would here have availed himself of the results already reached in the Positive Philosophy. The law of the three stages was ready to hand, together with the classification of the sciences according to their logical and historical order of evolution. His true master, however, among contemporary thinkers is not Comte, but Mill; he combines the *System of Logic* with the *Principles of Political Economy;* he looks on deduction as the great instrument by which knowledge is accumulated, and on induction as the great instrument of its diffusion.[1] We have to lament that his whole case is not before us, for it was in the unwritten chapters on Germany and America that these two processes were to have been more particularly studied. I believe, however,

[1] I., p. 224; II., pp. 579 *sqq*.

that the method chosen was a mistaken one, and that its inadequacy may be demonstrated from the portions which he lived to complete.

It would appear, to begin with, that Buckle had either no clear idea of what is meant by induction and deduction, or ideas which were the reverse of true. And here let us pause to observe that our philosopher, while professing to discard the methods employed by metaphysicians for investigating the laws of mind, and setting very little value on the positive results which they have attained,[1] has in fact borrowed the whole framework of his system from these very metaphysicians, without acknowledgment and without criticism. He justly censures Reid for multiplying unproved assumptions. Yet he had a common-sense system of his own; only he never got so far as Reid; he never consciously formulated it to himself. Preoccupied with the idea of general laws as the one great object of knowledge, he forgot that, before laws can be even looked for, a preliminary mental analysis is needed, sometimes of infinitely greater difficulty and importance than any subsequent part of the inquiry. But, as nobody can move an inch without such an analysis, he takes for granted the distinctions of common language and common thought, without perceiving their purely relative and provisional value. It is only by studying the history of these distinctions that we can free ourselves from their tyranny. Buckle, apparently, had never done so,

[1] He mentions as the sum-total "a very few of the laws of association" (one would like to know how many there are altogether), "and perhaps I may add the modern theories of vision and of touch" (I., p. 151). Yet out of these materials nearly the whole of a new psychology has been constructed.

and, not having mastered them, they have mastered him. They are perpetually misleading, or tripping him up, or gathering in a hopeless tangle about his steps. So it is with the antithesis between nature and man derived from the Greek Sophists; the antithesis between the intellectual and the moral derived from Aristotle; the Socratic confusion of dutifulness with knowledge; and the assumption of an immemorial, unchanging moral code, smacking strongly of intuitionism. Then, again, we have the scholastic separation of the imagination from the understanding; and on it is superimposed a theory that art is due to the one and science to the other. This supplies him with a ready explanation of the disproportionate development of art in Italy and Spain; the imagination being stimulated to excess in those countries by the more imposing aspects of nature as compared with Northern Europe. It seems to have escaped his notice that in art the Belgians far surpass the Swiss, while in science the relation is reversed. Elsewhere, as I have already observed, he does justice to the scientific uses of the imagination, but straightway proceeds to confound imagination either with a knowledge of the emotions or with the emotions themselves. These, he incidentally declares, "are as much a part of us as the understanding"—which has never been denied—and adds that "they are as truthful" and "as likely to be right";[1] a doctrine which, if it has any meaning at all, would immediately reopen the floodgates of superstition, and reverse the conclusions elsewhere maintained by its author.

[1] II., p. 502.

But of all the ideas that Buckle has borrowed from the "metaphysicians," he has used none so freely as their theories concerning the distinction between induction and deduction; nor is his want of philosophical training anywhere more painfully evinced, and this in three different directions: (1) as regards their abstract nature; (2) as regards their historical exemplification; and (3) as regards their connection with the accumulation and diffusion of knowledge. His account of the two methods is, at first starting, sufficiently accurate, though rather vague. "Induction is from particulars to generals, and from the senses to the ideas; deduction is from generals to particulars, and from the ideas to the senses."[1] But, on proceeding to explain what are the general propositions from which deduction sets out, he makes the following extraordinary assertion:—

> The deductive thinker invariably assumes certain premisses, which are quite different from the hypotheses essential to the best induction. These premisses are sometimes borrowed from antiquity; sometimes they are taken from the notions which happen to prevail in the surrounding society; sometimes they are the result of a man's own peculiar organisation; and sometimes..... they are deliberately invented, with the object of arriving, not at truth, but at an approximation to truth.

To which he adds that—

> a deductive habit, being essentially synthetic, always tends to multiply original principles or laws; while the tendency of an inductive habit is to diminish those laws by gradual and successive analysis.

Yet we had been previously told that—

> the inductive philosopher is naturally cautious, patient,

[1] II., p. 419.

and somewhat creeping; while the deductive philosopher is more remarkable for boldness, dexterity, and often rashness.[1]

One need only look at the mathematical sciences, which are universally admitted to be deductive, to see the absurdity of all this. To ascend from the part to the whole must always be *cæteris paribus* a more daring and hazardous process than to descend from the whole to the part. The truth is that what Buckle had in his mind throughout was not the opposition between two kinds of reasoning, but between reasoning on the one hand and observation and experiment on the other. For he mentions America as an extreme instance of the inductive spirit, and Germany of the deductive. Now, the Americans are well known to be excellent observers, but they have not contributed much to our stock of generalisations, either by the discovery of new or by the resolution of old laws; while German philosophy is remarkable for its habit of challenging current assumptions, and for its constant endeavour to construct systems out of the fewest possible first principles. Yet this interpretation, although it gives an intelligible meaning to some passages, is irreconcilable with others which seem to confound induction with the general principle of all reasoning, the demand of a proof; while deduction is represented as the submission of reason to unsupported authorities. Accordingly, the one method is characterised as theological, and the other as anti-theological.[2] The distinction cannot, in my opinion, be maintained. Particular facts may be, equally with general propositions, taken

[1] *Loc. cit.*

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 411 *sqq.*

for granted or accepted on faith, and theological systems not only may be, but have been, built up out of such alleged facts, with no more aid from general assumptions than is necessary to any inductive process whatever. And the errors of such a system, or of any system, may often be most effectually overthrown by showing that it involves a contradiction, either of its general propositions with each other, or of those propositions with their logical consequences—that is to say, by deductive reasoning. It has even been held that the function of syllogistic logic is essentially negative, that it only amounts to the complete elimination of self-contradiction from thought. Buckle most unfairly opposes the rigorous and scientific employment of the one method to the loose and popular employment of the other, thus altogether missing the close connection which recent logicians have shown to subsist between them.

When Buckle proceeds to illustrate the different types of reasoning by a survey of the literatures where he supposes them to be exemplified, his original misapprehension is continued and reinforced by other misapprehensions in the interpretation of those literatures. The Scotch intellect in the eighteenth century is chosen as an example of the deductive spirit; and the tendency of Scotch metaphysicians to assume the existence of ultimate principles in the human mind is given as an especial instance of its operation. An historian might perhaps be equally justified in taking Hume, Adam Smith, James Mill, and Thomas Brown, who all pursued the contrary method, as the

genuine representatives of Scotch philosophy. But, passing over this objection, is it not obvious that we have here a confusion of psychology with logic; that to insist (whether rightly or wrongly) on the indecomposable character of certain mental phenomena; to maintain even that we have internal sources of knowledge independent of experience—is an entirely different thing from preferring one kind of demonstration to another? It might as well be said that the chemist who believes in the indecomposable character of the so-called elements is more deductive than he who seeks to resolve them all into a single substance, as that the *a priori* psychologist is so distinguished from his analytical rival. Indeed, of the two I should say that he who evolves all the manifold varieties of consciousness from the combinations of a few simple feelings, approaches nearest to the mathematical, and therefore to the deductive, method. The common-sense school, as their very name implies, were not reasoners at all; they never went beyond a superficial description and classification of the mental phenomena.

In dealing with the origin of this so-called philosophy, Buckle is equally at fault. According to him, its method is theological, its results are secular and liberal. The truth, however, is that Hutcheson, the founder of the school, borrowed his innate principles from Shaftesbury and Butler, who, being English, ought, on our author's view, to have taught the contrary system; while the habit of assuming their existence, once introduced, found high favour with orthodox Scotchmen, because it seemed to make for the spirituality of the soul and

the supernatural origin of conscience ; thus furnishing a welcome support to those dogmas by which they were still powerfully affected. We are told that in Scotland the intellectual classes have long been remarkable for "boldness of investigation and freedom from prejudice."[1] I believe all continental critics will agree with me in thinking that they have been, comparatively speaking, much more remarkable for narrowness and timidity.

It is quite in accordance with his singular view of method that Buckle should declare Hume's metaphysical essays an exception to the generally deductive character of Scotch philosophy. For Hume was both the most sceptical of all thinkers and the one who carried the experiential system farthest. Yet, looking not at the matter, but at the logical form of those essays, I do not see how they can be distinguished from his other writings. For reasons already suggested, I should be inclined to consider them better examples of deduction than of induction. But, properly speaking, there is a stage at which speculation is so little developed that it cannot be brought under any strictly defined type of reasoning at all. Its method is then that of analogy, a rough attempt to interpret the unknown in terms of the known. The *Natural History of Religion* is a good example of this process. Hume, without investigating the evidence furnished by travellers, declared that polytheism was the natural religion of savages. Does it follow that his conclusions were evolved out of his own mind? By no means. He argued from the widest

[1] I., p. 225.

experience that the more abstract and universal a notion is, the more difficult is it to grasp ; and that the higher manifestations of mind follow, instead of preceding, the lower. In fact, he argued from all that was already known by experience of children, of uneducated persons, and of savages, to what still remained to be known of these last. To collect the facts about savage belief, and then to restate them in abstract terms, would not have been induction, because it would not have been reasoning of any kind, but simply description.

Buckle's account of Adam Smith is open both to these and to other criticisms. The works of that great thinker are represented as a perfect type of the deductive method. The *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and the *Wealth of Nations* are interpreted as complementary portions of a single science, having for its object the reduction of human nature to law. The peculiarity of the scheme is that the two grand motives of human action are separately considered, and treated apart from each other's disturbing action. These two motives are sympathy and selfishness ; the one is discussed in the *Moral Sentiments*, the other in the *Wealth of Nations*. By a logical artifice, each in turn is assumed to be the whole factor in human conduct ; although, in reality, their effects are always conjoined. Buckle exemplifies what he supposes to have been the method of Adam Smith by a singularly unlucky illustration from geometry. Real lines, he tells us, always have both length and breadth ; but the geometrician, in order to avoid insoluble complications, assumes that they possess the former attribute only. We are not informed whether he

subsequently rectifies his omission by postulating lines which have breadth without length; but to complete the parallel he certainly ought to do so. A much more pertinent illustration would have been furnished by dynamics, which really does begin with the effect of forces taken singly, and afterwards proceeds to study them in combination. I conceive, however, that no such idea ever entered the head of Adam Smith as is attributed to him by his admirer. His two great works would, indeed, according to Buckle's theory, serve, not to complete, but to contradict and upset each other. For, be it observed, they do not study simple tendencies, but actual concrete facts of history and every-day life. To say that whatever men feel and think and do is the effect of their sympathies, and then to say that it is the effect of their selfishness, would, if these two forces were necessarily opposed to one another, be simply an unintelligible paradox. But the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is, as its very name implies, an inquiry into the origin of certain feelings, which are nowhere assumed to exercise a paramount influence over human conduct; nor, although they are derived from sympathy, do they exhaust its manifestations. Neither do sympathy and selfishness, in Smith's view of them, either divide the whole field of human nature, or reciprocally exclude one another.[1] The tendency to give and to seek for sympathy does not, in its original form, imply any self-sacrifice, and, in its more complex manifestations, is eminently favourable to

[1] That is, according to the present use of terms, which is also Buckle's. Adam Smith says that sympathy is not a selfish principle, using selfish in a much narrower sense than ours,

that desire for wealth which Adam Smith regards as the principal cause of economic progress. Thus the *Wealth of Nations*, so far from taking up a psychological position opposed to, or lying outside, that of the *Moral Sentiments,* simply assumes the existence of desires which, in that work, had been explained, whether rightly or wrongly, as a particular manifestation of our social feelings. Moreover, even if its reasonings were based on the supposition that selfishness (in its narrowest sense) is the sole spring of action, they would not give a complete account of it, but only of so much as is concerned with the production of economical phenomena; while, again, the analysis of those phenomena embraces a variety of topics with which the science of human nature, properly so called, has nothing whatever to do.

But if Adam Smith's works do not, when taken together, constitute a deductive psychology, can it be said that each of them singly is an example of the deductive method? Certainly not according to Buckle's own definitions. For the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* makes no unsupported assertions; it perpetually appeals to experience; and, instead of multiplying ethical principles, seeks to reduce them to one. Neither does the *Wealth of Nations* reason down from causes to effects, but, contrariwise, ascends from effects to causes, which, we are elsewhere informed, is a process characteristic of induction.[1] We begin with the division of labour, and are gradually led on to exchange, to the circulating medium, and to the different elements of

[1] II., p. 515.

price. Our modern systems are arranged on the opposite plan ; they follow the objective order of things, not the subjective order of thoughts. It is true that Adam Smith does not obey the rules of induction laid down by Bacon ; but then no science ever was, or ever could be, constructed in accordance with those rules. The same remark applies to Scotch physical philosophy. No doubt, it was largely hypothetical, conjectural, and not immediately verified by experience. But when was there ever a physical philosophy of which the same could not be said? Buckle does, indeed, draw a very marked distinction between the literatures of Scotland, on the one hand, and of England and France on the other. The former alone, according to him, was deductive; the latter two were inductive. But, had he taken pains to analyse the productions of English and French philosophy from the logical point of view, he could hardly have failed to notice how little they differed, in that respect, from the Scotch systems. He admits that Harvey and Newton used the deductive method. But Harvey and Newton between them represent half the scientific English intellect of their century ; and if we add Hobbes, who assuredly reasoned from generals to particulars quite as much as, if not more than, Adam Smith, the balance will incline heavily against induction. Observation and experiment were, it is true, the favourite occupations of English science in the eighteenth century ; but these are only subsidiary operations, not to be confounded with the generalising process itself.

With regard to the French philosophy of the same period, only a preconceived theory could have

made anyone blind to its predominatingly deductive character. To prove this, I need only quote what M. Taine, a most competent authority, has stated on the subject:—

> Suivre en toute recherche, avec toute confiance, sans réserve ni précaution, la méthode des mathématiciens; extraire, circonscrire, isoler quelques notions très-simples et très-générales, puis, abandonnant l'expérience, les comparer, les combiner, et du composé artificiel ainsi obtenu, déduire par le raisonnement toutes les conséquences qu'il enferme: tel est le procédé naturel de l'esprit classique. Il lui est si bien inné qu'on le rencontre également dans les deux siècles, chez Descartes, Malebranche et les partisans des idées pures comme chez les partisans de la sensation, du besoin physique, de l'instinct primitif, Condillac, Rousseau, Helvétius, plus tard Condorcet Volney, Sièyes, Cabanis et Destutt de Tracy. Ceux-ci ont beau se dire sectateurs de Bacon et rejeter les idées innées; avec un autre point de départ que les Cartésiens, ils marchent dans la même voie, et comme les Cartésiens, après un leger emprunt ils laissent là l'expérience.[1]

It may be added that pure mathematics and astronomy, of which the former had always been deductive, and the latter had recently become so, were the sciences most successfully cultivated by Frenchmen at this period; that Haüy, the great mineralogist, was, according to Buckle himself, indebted to deduction for his famous discovery; and that the igneous and aqueous hypotheses in geology, which are given as instances of the same method when respectively employed by a Scotchman and a German, had already been similarly employed by Buffon, a representative French thinker. But the syllogistic character of the French intellect is so

[1] *L'Ancien Régime*, I., pp. 262–3.

notorious that to illustrate it at greater length would be a waste of words.

Such a profound misconception of the logical methods, whether considered in the abstract or the concrete, either produced or originated with an equally profound misconception of their sociological function. In order to carry out his parallel between the economics of industry and the economics of intellect, Buckle, as we have already seen, associated the accumulation of knowledge with the use of the deductive method, and its diffusion with the opposite procedure. Greece, Scotland, and Germany are examples of the former; England, France, and America of the latter. The nations belonging to the first group are remarkable for great breadth and boldness of speculation, but also for the deep gulf left between the intellectual classes and the mass of the people; while, in nations belonging to the second group, fewer great thinkers have arisen, but enlightenment has been more widely diffused, and, in England at least, a more regular development of civilisation has been secured. Three distinct grounds are offered in explanation of this alleged fact. Deductive reasoning rests on unproved assumptions. So also does theology, the great obstacle to intellectual progress; therefore it cannot be overthrown by a method partaking so largely of its own spirit. I have already taken occasion to show that this argument is invalid. The assumptions of science, not being accepted on authority, cannot favour authority; and false assumptions may be dialectically, as well as experimentally, overthrown. I have now to add that, granting the French philosophy of the last century

to have been both deductive and sceptical, the possibility of a close connexion between the two characteristics is demonstrated; and a further proof will be found in the circumstance that English scepticism has always flourished most when deduction has been most generally employed.[1]

Buckle's second explanation is much more plausible. Where philosophers are removed from contact with the people, they will remain less affected by popular prejudices and less concerned about the consequences of their teaching. For that reason the physical schools of Ionia and Magna Græcia were far more daring in their denials than the ethical schools of Athens. Nevertheless, when the people have once become thoroughly sceptical their sympathy and support will give a fresh impetus to advanced thought among their teachers. That is just what is happening in Germany now.[2] On the other hand, where the people are both educated and bigoted, such a mere trifle as logical method will not prevent them from exercising the sternest control over their university professors. Hence the official science of Scotland is remarkable for its orthodoxy. Even Adam Smith was obliged to show of what edifying religious applications his moral theories admitted; and the conservative tendencies of the "common-sense" school have already been mentioned.

So far the respective influence of the two systems,

[1] In 1840–60 it was associated with the first entrance of German philosophy; in 1860–80 with deductive theories of evolution; and in 1880–1900 with the Hegelian logic.

[2] Since these words were first written the purely intellectual evolution of German thought has been hampered by the efforts of the rich to place their property under the protection of a rehabilitated Christianity.

as viewed by Buckle, is negative rather than positive. The one, according to his theory, does, and the other does not, remove the causes of popular superstition. The one does, and the other does not, leave the foremost minds completely free to work out the remotest consequences of their speculations. We now pass to the positive reason why induction should contribute more powerfully than the rival method to a general diffusion of knowledge. We are told that this is because the observations on which it rests, being accessible to a far greater number of minds, are proportionately better appreciated and more readily accepted than the abstract reasonings of deduction. Possibly our author may have had in his mind various passages where Aristotle describes induction as clearer, more persuasive, and more popular than the syllogism, which, on the other hand, is more cogent, and corresponds better to the order of natural causation. Such a distinction, however, applies rather to the loose illustrative induction of the Greeks than to the rigorous observations and experiments of modern science, where the facts are often much more abstruse than the inferences founded upon them. What these facts are can only be known to a few; the vulgar either remain ignorant of their existence, or else take it on trust; and, when faith is once admitted, all kinds of conclusions may profit by it equally, irrespective of the evidence on which they rest. Again, when Buckle says that "for one person who can think there are at least a hundred persons who can observe,"[1] he forgets that

[1] II., p. 582.

induction, being a process of reasoning, is necessarily a process of thought. Nor has the greater or less difficulty of understanding and practically applying a principle when once discovered anything to do with the kind of investigation by which it has been reached, or with the kind of proof by which it has been established. It might also be easily maintained that, while the tendency of generalisation is to lead us away from experience, the tendency of deduction is to lead us back to experience. A new truth may easily commend itself to the popular mind by explaining a multitude of phenomena which never would have suggested it to the original discoverer. Nothing serves to extend a knowledge of scientific theories so much as the inventions by which they are utilised. But both the making and the explaining of inventions are essentially deductive processes; they are the application of general laws to concrete facts. The truth is that, while all knowledge tends spontaneously to spread, the means by which its diffusion can be hastened have little or nothing to do with the order of investigations by which it was first obtained. The remark may seem commonplace, but popular education is not a question of logical method at all. It depends primarily on scholastic machinery, and more remotely on religion, literature, and government—that is to say, on agencies which Buckle has summarily excluded from his scheme of intellectual progress.

The theory of logical economy equally breaks down when we come to examine its historical verification. It is not true that Greek philosophy had no power to diminish popular superstition. One

need only compare Euripides with Æschylus, or even Xenophon with Herodotus, to appreciate its effect. Without it, indeed, the conversion of the Roman world from a naturalistic polytheism to an ethical monotheism could never have been accomplished; without it Roman jurisprudence could not have been rationalised; without its revival mediæval darkness could not have been so speedily dissipated. The case of Germany is still stronger. No doubt the state of German middle-class education leaves much to be desired, and, by all accounts, is rather deteriorating than improving. No doubt, also, there is a deep division between the intellectual classes and the rest of the people. But this is due far more to the literary peculiarities of German philosophy than to its method of research. The public are repelled by speculative treatises, not because they reason from first principles, but because they are detestably written. A profoundly speculative work like the *Philosophy of the Unconscious* will run through several editions, if its style be but tolerably good. For the same reason Buckle's own book has had a great success in Germany—greater even than in England—although its method is rather deductive than inductive. But whether German philosophy be popularly studied or not, the scepticism now diffused through every class in Germany bears witness to the immense influence which it exerts on public opinion. If it is to be taken as a symptom of superstition that the Scotch churches are "still filled with devout and ignorant worshippers,"[1] it must surely be taken as

[1] II., pp. 589.

a symptom of the contrary that the German churches are so scantily attended. Whatever Buckle says of Scotland is just what a continental critic would say of England, and, if so, every such charge would redound to the discredit of the inductive method which is supposed to have regulated our civilisation. Again, one would suppose from Buckle's language on the subject that the northern and southern divisions of Great Britain were sundered either by a difference of language or by an impassable frontier, instead of reading the same books, profiting by the same discoveries, and carrying on an uninterrupted exchange of ideas. Whatever our literature has done for ourselves, it ought to have done, although perhaps not to an equal extent, for the Scotch.

A less ingenious theorist than Buckle would probably have been contented with a more obvious explanation of whatever bigotry still survives in Scotland. Having once struck deeper root, the theological or puritanical spirit has naturally remained stronger in that country than in England or France ; but there seems no reason for believing that Scotland compares with them, in that respect, more unfavourably now than at any time during the last three centuries. Granting that she is not yet on a level with them, it does not follow that she has not made equal progress in the same period. And if, as will hardly be denied, she is no longer (for good or evil) in the religious condition of the seventeenth century, why should not the change be attributed, at least in part, to her philosophy? It is no little matter that she should have produced two such writers as Burns and Scott, at once so

national, so popular, and so filled with the secular and humanistic spirit of modern civilisation. Surely their appearance, coming when it did, together with that of the numerous minor luminaries who surrounded them, was not unconnected with the triumphs already won by their predecessors in the more abstract spheres of thought. And if Scotch literature cannot truly be said to have exercised no influence on the national spirit, neither can it be said to have received none in return.[1] If the Scotch thinkers, with one exception, let theology alone, this was not from any incapacity on their part to call in question its fundamental assumptions, but because they either shared its beliefs, or were deterred by the strength of public opinion from openly assailing them. And the solitary exception, Hume, differed from his contemporaries not because he employed the inductive method, but because he lived a good deal abroad, and never held a university professorship at home.

We have seen, then, that the philosophy of individualism, when carried from the economics of material industry into the more complex economics of mental energy, gives rise to misconceptions and inconsistencies at every step. After the whole weight of human progress has been thrown on advancing knowledge, the basis of knowledge itself is so isolated, so narrowed, so weakened by internal disintegration, that the resulting strain terminates in a complete collapse. Where the analogy of material industry might have been profitably

[1] II., pp. 586.

employed, it is neglected. Where the laws regulating production, distribution, and governmental interference are inapplicable, they are forcibly imposed on the phenomena. Standing by the ruined edifice, we ask ourselves on what other plan it could have been built. The answer is that, first of all, the materials which our architect pushed aside must be properly utilised. We must not isolate from each other forces which are only different aspects of a fundamental unity, inseparable in the completed idea no less than in the living fact. We must overcome these scholastic antitheses of nature and man, morals and intellect, imagination and understanding, emotion and reason, induction and deduction. We must cease to look on the governing classes as eternal blunderers and bullies. In the history of our race, everything is natural, everything is human, everything emotional, imaginative, and moral. I will even say that, using the word "religion" to denote the provisional synthesis of these various agencies, and extending the word "government" to all forms of co-operation, whether spontaneous or permanently organised, everything is religious and governmental. Still more, if possible, must we recognise within each department a necessary consensus of functions. Whatever makes for the accumulation of knowledge makes also for its diffusion, and reciprocally. Without hypothesis there would be no induction, and without experience no deduction. The one process, as Stanley Jevons has shown, is an inversion of the other. Moreover, the generalisations with which our inquiries begin are partial and precarious; their growth in solidity and in sweep

is proportioned to the number of particulars successfully explained by their application. Neither can the intellect of any nation continue to advance without perpetual excitement from its neighbours; and it is here, I think, that we can learn the most valuable lessons from Buckle. He was right in assigning a distinct scientific genius to each of the great civilised peoples; but the narrowness of his own economic scheme prevented him from discerning what were, in each instance, the differential characteristics. I firmly believe, however, that such a comparative psychology is possible, and that even now its outlines might be traced. For example, at the beginning of this essay I have attempted to show that there is a unity of composition running through the most divergent manifestations of our modern English philosophy. But this is a vein of thought which cannot be worked out any farther within my present limits.

It would have been impossible to tell beforehand what view of history would be taken by the studious son of an English merchant, whose opinions were formed during the great agitation for free-trade. But, when we know by experience what view he actually did take, the theory seems to be in perfect harmony with a social environment of which it was the most interesting, though not the most highly organised nor the most enduring expression. In endeavouring to represent Buckle's philosophy as something more than a mere product of individual genius, I have been faithful, amid all differences, to that most general principle which it shares with every philosophy worthy of the name, and which it has contributed so powerfully to enforce. Twenty-

five years ago the idea of law, universal and unbroken, was almost a paradox. It is now almost a commonplace; and among those by whose efforts so vast a change in public opinion was accomplished must be placed the name of this noble thinker, whose learning and eloquence have not often been singly equalled, and, in their combination, have never, to my knowledge, been approached.

THE MORALS OF AN IMMORALIST—FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

GERMANY, so rich in every other kind of philosophical literature, has not contributed much to ethical thought. Innumerable *Sittenlehren* have doubtless flowed from the laborious pens of her professors; and her great writers have given utterance to many casual thoughts on the problems of good and evil, virtue and vice. But, with the single exception of Kant's categorical imperative, she has produced nothing that the world in general has accepted as comparable to the achievements in the same field of Greece, Rome, and Britain. Fichte and Schopenhauer come next to Kant for interest and value. They cannot, however, be said to have produced much impression outside Germany; and their morality is, or at least claims to be, so closely bound up with their metaphysics as inevitably to suffer by detachment from their illusive interpretations of existence. And even Kant really did no more than emphasise and precisionise the idea of moral obligation, utterly failing in his subsequent attempt to fill up the blank form with a specific sum of moral prescriptions.

This speculative weakness, assuming it to exist, is not easy to explain. It certainly is not connected with any admitted deficiency on the practical side. The Germans yield to no other great nation in moral seriousness and dutifulness; such triumphs

as they have achieved in war and peace would have been impossible to a selfish, a frivolous, or a self-indulgent race. Nor has the disposition to theorise on what they do ever been lacking among them ; if anything, it is present to excess. In fact, what one misses is not ethical theorising, but originality and life in the theories.

It may be that the extreme liberty of theological speculation in Germany, combined with the want of political liberty, accounts for this anomaly, as the reverse conditions account for the extraordinary development of ethical thought in the schools of Athens and in Great Britain. For at Athens always, as among ourselves until quite recently, the popular religion perverted metaphysics into an abstract mythology ; while the popular respect for personal liberty gave free play to real or ideal reconstructions of life. Plato is nearly as cautious as Mill when he touches on the ultimate realities of nature ; Mill is nearly as bold as Plato when he sets up ultimate standards of conduct. Whatever freedom of thinking for ourselves in cosmic science we possess is due to Germany. Whatever freedom of social action the Germans possess they owe to us. Their *Frauenbewegung* is there to prove it.

Within our own memory Germany has for the first time produced a truly ethical genius—a thinker with whom problems of conduct constituted from beginning to end the supreme, if not the sole, interest of life. It may seem strange that I should say so much of the dæmonic and tragic figure whose name stands at the head of this study. For Friedrich Nietzsche habitually posed as an

immoralist, an emancipator from moral restrictions, speaking of what he called "moralin" as a deadly poison. Nietzsche's friends, however, a most respectable set of people, were not in the least appalled by such language, nor need we take it in very deadly earnest. They saw in it no more than a strong way of saying that much of what passes for absolute right and good is only true within certain very narrow limitations, and that there are impulses, supposed to be very virtuous, which tend on the whole to do mankind more harm than good, as well as impulses, supposed to be vicious, that tend to exalt it in the scale of real value.

In giving this paradoxical form to his morality Nietzsche was merely following the constant tradition of German philosophy. We are accustomed, and for that matter his own countrymen are accustomed, to look on Hegel as a quite exceptional instance of what may be done in the way of setting common sense at defiance. But Hegel, with his immanent dialectic of self-contradictory positions, reconciled in a higher synthesis, only brought to a point what had been more or less the method of all his predecessors, and was destined to be the method of his chief successors also. Kant naïvely supposed that he was dissipating Hume's scepticism by an audacity of negation before which Hume would have shrunk back appalled; and, not content with that performance, he proceeded to integrate Free Will with a system which, literally to all appearances, left Determinism master of the field. Fichte, after reducing the non-ego—that is, the whole objective world—to an assumption of the ego, sets the ego the task of negating its own negation, which is at the

same time the condition of its existence, with the comfortable assurance that a consummation which would be fatal to both parties needs all eternity for its achievement. More impatient than his master, Schelling boldly identifies the two under the names of "object" and "subject," and the world goes on as before—indeed, according to him, always has gone on precisely because it always knew that there was no difference between them. Schopenhauer, after disdainfully rejecting the systems of his fellow metaphysicians as so many absurdities, sets up a new absolute, which, after willing itself out of nonentity into existence, learns from sad experience the desirability of willing itself back from existence into nonentity again. And to this contradiction, which lies at the very basis of his system, he adds another not less serious contradiction in working out its details. While asserting the substantial identity of all our individual wills with one another and with the universal will of which they are so many partial manifestations, he yet limits the self-negating power of each will to itself. On entering into Nirvâna I redeem myself alone; the infinite anguish of the world goes on as before. Yet at the same time the short cut of suicide is barred to me by the solemn warning that self-inflicted death amounts to a rebellious reaffirmation of the will which it seems to deny.

This immanent self-contradiction of German thought, although it first became open and scandalous in Kant's criticism, is older than Kant. To go no further back, it already afflicts the monadology of Leibnitz. Those minute individual existences of which the world consists have no

windows opening on the world, nor do they receive influences of any kind from one another; but all go on developing at the same pace, each by virtue of an evolutionary principle peculiar to itself. Thus, although every monad reflects the universe at an angle of its own, it has no reason to believe that this phantasmagoria represents an objective reality, for its whole experience would be the same supposing no such reality to be present; and although, by the hypothesis, solipsism is not true, there seems to be no evidence of its untruth.

It appears, then, that a German moral philosophy, to be thoroughly native and smacking of the soil, must at once affirm and deny morality. We shall, therefore, not be surprised to find that Nietzsche, while offering a brilliant exception to the rule that his country does not breed pure moralists, confirms the rule that her philosophies willingly assume the form of a square circle—that bold construction which Professor Meinong, no doubt on the strength of long experience, has recently declared to be quite conceivable.

Furthermore, it is necessary, or at least traditional, that a German philosopher, to be original, should not only end by contradicting himself, but that he should begin by contradicting another German, preferentially his own master. And we shall find that the author of *Zarathustra* was quite up to the mark in this respect also. The teacher to whose school he first belonged, and who afterwards became the chief object of his attacks, was Schopenhauer. Nietzsche was twenty years of age and a university student when, in 1865, he first came across the great pessimist's writings, at that

time only in the first dawn of their popularity. What chiefly attracted him seems to have been their high literary merit and the sincerity of their author—a sincerity displayed above all in his attitude towards theology. Schopenhauer really stood no farther from the central beliefs of Christianity than Hegel, if as far; but he never bowed down in the temple of Rimmon to the extent of passing himself off as an orthodox Lutheran or other Churchman of any kind. He venerated the figure of Christ; but there could be no doubt that his metaphysics excluded the notion of a God and of a future life just as much as they excluded the possibility of a happy life on earth. And that was why the bankruptcy of Hegelianism after 1848 left the system of Kant's rival continuator in a position no better than before. For to the pietistic and obscurantist reaction that succeeded the abortive revolution free thought was as hateful under the form of atheistic pessimism as under the form of optimistic pantheism. We are apt to look on Germany as the great emancipator from superstition, and I have already acknowledged the greatness of our own indebtedness to her delivering example; but in this instance, as in the early eighteenth century, she seems to have been led out of darkness by light from the West, by the influence of Buckle and Darwin, and by Renan's *Vie de Jésus,* followed up as this was by Strauss's second *Leben Jesu.* At any rate, a far more liberal tone prevailed in the sixties than in the previous decade; and Schopenhauer's philosophy profited by the new spirit, which it also stimulated in the highest degree, to achieve a rapid and dazzling success.

Nietzsche was the son of a Protestant pastor, and belonged on his mother's side also to a clerical family. Brought up on strict religious principles, he had learned to set a particular value on veracity, regarding it, rather oddly, as a specially Christian virtue, whereas, in theory at least, it is more Greek than Christian. He also was, or believed himself to be, descended from a noble Polish family exiled on account of their religion early in the eighteenth century; so that in his case the obligation of fidelity to truth was heightened by the consciousness of representing an aristocratic and martyr tradition. Finally, Nietzsche had chosen classical philology for his profession, and had obtained a chair at Basel when still under twenty-four, so that for some years afterwards his life was chiefly devoted to the study of Greek literature and philosophy. Now, while giving, as I have said, more credit to Christianity than it deserves as a discipline in truthfulness, he still acknowledges that "the Greeks had the faithfulness and the veracity of children."[1]

At a much later period our immoralist loved to maintain that the sincerity which, as a religious habit, revolts against the profession of a false religion is, as a moral habit, destructive of the morality which is no more than a convention. And he also maintained, in contemptuous reference to George Eliot, that to believe in Christian morality apart from Christianity is a weak inconsistency.[2] It was both ungracious and unjust to taunt our

[1] *WW.*, IX., p. 104; written in 1871. In the references *WW.*=Nietzsche's *Werke,* Leipzig, 1895, 1904, large 8vo ed.; *W. z. M.*=*Wille zur Macht,* Leipzig, 1901, small 8vo ed.; *Leben*=*Das Leben Fr. Nietzsches,* von Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche.

[2] *WW.*, VIII., p. 120.

great ethical novelist with being characteristically English or womanish in this respect; for Schopenhauer, who was Continental and virile, had made the same mistake, if mistake it is, and Nietzsche had at first followed his master's example. Accepting pessimism to this extent, that the search for happiness must be abandoned as a chimera, in his work on *The Origin of Tragedy* (published 1872), he tells us that a chief note of tragic culture is "an attempt to make the sufferings of the world our own by an effort of sympathetic love."[1] Greek tragedy preaches a gospel of universal harmony, whereby everyone feels himself not merely united, fused, and reconciled, but absolutely one with his neighbour.[2] And in a subsequent work on *The Study of History,* among the redeeming representatives of humanity, he names not only those who have passed through existence in pride and strength, or in profound meditation, but also those who have come "to pity and help."[3] Later again he tells us that "there is not enough goodness and love in the world to let them be wasted on imaginary objects."[4] And he had previously made the perfectly sane and sufficiently obvious remark that goodness and pity fortunately do not depend on the decay and growth of religion; although "*practical* morality will suffer by its collapse." At the same time, this dependence of action on religious sanctions deprives it, in his opinion, of all ethical value.[5]

Returning to Schopenhauer, it is noticeable that Nietzsche accepted his teaching not only on the

[1] *WW.*, I., p. 128. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 24. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 297.
[4] *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches,* p. 129; *WW.*, II., 133.
[5] *WW.*, X., p. 214.

ethical, but also on the metaphysical, side. His work on *The Origin of Tragedy* is a bold attempt to read the philosophy of pessimism into the Greek tragic drama. It arose, according to him, from a combination of the worship of Dionysus with the worship of Apollo. The one god represents the element of Will and the other the element of Representation in his master's great work. Dionysus stands for "that original and eternal pain which is the sole substance of the world," "the true reality and primordial One with its eternal suffering and self-contradiction, seeking for deliverance by the creation of beautiful appearance—the Apolline element of Greek tragedy."[1]

Schopenhauer had conceived music as a direct interpretation of that suffering Will which is the true substance of the world, whereas the other arts have for their material the series of Platonic Ideas, the forms and forces of nature which are one degree farther removed from its absolute reality. And Nietzsche conceives Greek tragedy as having originated from music precisely because it furnishes such an artistic revelation of the awful secret at the heart of things. Now, Richard Wagner had long before him enthusiastically adopted a theory so flattering to his own art; and, partly, no doubt, on the strength of their philosophical agreement, he and the young professor of philology at Basel had become fast friends, the two frequently spending their week-ends together at the house of the great composer near Lucerne. Indeed, Wagner is so glorified as a modern Æschylus in *The Origin of*

[1] *WW.*, I., pp. 34 and 35.

Tragedy that, rather to its author's annoyance, the general public regarded that work chiefly as a rapturous panegyric on the music of the future.

As an interpretation of Greek art *The Origin of Tragedy* has no value, and was very properly condemned by one destined to become in after years the foremost Hellenist of his age, Wilamowitz-Möllendorff. With regard to Wagner, no more need be said than that Nietzsche soon came to form a very different opinion of his performances, giving music a much lower place among the means of culture, and a much lower place among musicians to that particular composer. But in a general way Wagner's influence proved of decisive importance for his philosophical development. Combined with the study of Schopenhauer and of the Greeks, it led him to conceive the promotion of genius as the highest form of moral effort. This, as we shall see, was by no means identical with his subsequent theory of the superman, although it led the way to that theory; nor was it at first inconsistent either with pessimism or with the common morality. Assuming that the contemplation of beautiful and sublime objects is the chief, if not the sole, refreshment available in a world of universal and incurable misery, the power of creating beauty, which we call genius, is a valuable asset for humanity, and ought by every means to be encouraged.

Unfortunately, the moral end of genius has, so far, been very imperfectly fulfilled. "Artists undoubtedly create their works for the benefit of other men; and yet none will ever understand and love their works as they did." It would have been a better arrangement had the relation been reversed,

so that the effect should far exceed the cause.[1] Such blunders are, however, to be expected. "Nature always wills the common good, but is incapable of choosing the best means for that purpose. She shoots philosophers like arrows at the human race, in the hope that they will strike and stick somewhere"—whereas they are mostly wasted.[2]

Nature, then, must be taught better—she must receive a more intelligent direction; and here morality intervenes, although not quite according to the highest ideals now prevalent. "The goal of human endeavour has hitherto been sought in the happiness of all men or of the majority, or in the development of great communities; and under this false persuasion people will be found ready enough to give their lives for the State; whereas they would hesitate to make the sacrifice were it demanded, not by the State, but by an individual. As if value and significance were to be determined by counting heads!" A much mistaken view, thinks our author, with the old bias of a university teacher. "Humanity must be ever working at the production of great individuals: that, and nothing else, is its task.....a consideration suggested by every species of animal and plant."[3] In our case education must supplement nature. Young men should be taught to compensate for their own imperfection and failure by contributing to the development of something higher and more human than themselves.[4] But the hope thus awakened soon droops. "It is hard to produce such a state

[1] *WW.*, I., p. 467 *sq.*
[2] *Loc. cit.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 442.
[4] P. 443.

of mind, for love alone can inspire the consciousness of one's own imperfection ; and love cannot be taught."[1] Indeed, things are tending in a directly opposite direction. Writing in 1874, Nietzsche tells us that "the world was never more worldly, never poorer in love and goodness."[2] A common view is to value culture as a means for procuring its possessor the greatest possible amount of earthly happiness.[3] Or again, the selfishness of the State demands that all culture shall be made instrumental to its service and aggrandisement. Christianity in particular, which began as one of the purest expressions of the impulse towards culture, "has been diverted from the production of saints into a means for the manufacture of useful citizens."[4] Science offers no help; it is "cold, dry, loveless ; it ignores the deep sense of dissatisfaction and longing."[5] And "such is the hatred for originality now prevailing that Socrates could not have lived among us, or at least not lived to seventy."[6]

It will be seen from the above extracts that, up to the age of thirty at least, Nietzsche still accepted those altruistic ideals which in later life he was never weary of denouncing. In this respect he followed Schopenhauer, who contrived to combine the most absolute disinterestedness in theory with the most absolute selfishness in practice. A really consistent pessimism would remain neutral as between egoism and altruism, since the furtherance of life is of equally little value to myself and to others. But Nietzsche had never been a pessimist in the complete or Hindoo sense of cultivating the

[1] P. 444. [2] P. 421. [3] P. 447.
[4] P. 448. [5] P. 453. [6] P. 462.

will not to live, regarding such an aspiration as self-contradictory, or at least unthinkable. And, apart from logic, his personal experiences were such as to disgust him with the master's ideal of pleasure as what alone makes life worth living. While still a student at Leipzig the Prussian military law obliged him to serve for a time in the artillery. His career as a gunner did not last long, for a rupture of the thoracic muscles, caused by the attempt to mount a restive horse, resulted in an illness that incapacitated him from continued service in the ranks, and a short attendance with the ambulance corps before Metz in 1870 had a still more ruinous effect on his constitution. But even so much of a soldier's life, chiming in well with the aristocratic and fighting instincts of his Polish blood, gave the young professor a new idea of the possible value of life. If existence yielded no happiness, it still afforded the joy of victoriously resisting the assaults of pain; and from that heroic conflict, continued in after years through intense agonies of suffering, he came forth an optimist, continuing in his faith to the end.

Hellenic studies no doubt contributed to his conversion. In his first work, when still under the influence of Wagner and Schopenhauer, Nietzsche had falsely interpreted Greek tragedy as a pessimistic manifesto, and, by a strangely perverted reading of literary history, he had ascribed its dissolution to the opposite teaching of Socrates and Euripides. We have already come across a passage indicating a much more favourable view of Socrates; and in another passage, written about 1877, a good time is looked forward to when Xenophon's *Memorabilia*

will be substituted for the Bible as a manual of rational morality.[1] Earlier still the age had been referred for its models to the old Greek world, "so great, so natural, and so human."[2] It was through the higher power of their moral nature that the Greeks were victorious over all other civilisations.[3]

Familiarity with Hellenic ideals inevitably drew our philosopher away from Richard Wagner's romanticist views of art and life. The breach between them began at the Bayreuth festival of 1876, when some traits of petty vanity and selfishness in the master's character first became painfully apparent to his young admirer. What made it irremediable was a question of morality and religion. Up to 1874 Wagner had been a declared and uncompromising atheist. During the last years of his life he developed a sort of mystical Christianity, in which the ideas of a human fall and recovery through atonement played the most conspicuous part. His opera *Parsifal* was intended to illustrate the new departure, and the plans for its composition formed the subject of frequent conversations between himself and a group of friends at Sorrento in the autumn of 1876. Nietzsche, who was one of these, listened with dismay and disgust to what he considered an insincere betrayal of the convictions they had once held in common,[4] all the more offensive because it was symptomatic of a general pietistic reaction set up by the higher classes in Germany, with a view both to consolidating the new Empire and resisting the spread of Socialism.

[1] *WW.*, III., p. 248. [2] *WW.*, I., p. 352.
[3] *Ibid.*, 384. [4] *Leben*, II., p. 857.

Wagner's apostasy seems to have had the effect of driving Nietzsche into an attitude of more open hostility towards Christianity, and, indeed, towards all theism. Since religion could exercise such a fatal effect on the intellectual integrity of genius, it was not only false, but dangerous, and ought to be destroyed. His next work, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches (So Very Human)*, appeared in 1878, the centenary of Voltaire's death, and is dedicated to his memory. It consists of loose critical notes couched in the aphoristic form which the writer afterwards came to handle with such supreme mastery, and which alone suited his disconnected and irresponsible mode of thinking. The general trend of reflection offers a series of striking contrasts to the writer's earlier points of view; although an attentive consideration shows that the transition was already being silently prepared towards the close of the first period. In dealing with so very personal a writer we shall best understand the evolution of his ideas by constant reference to the events of his life.

It will be remembered that in embracing pessimism our moralist had also embraced the ethical ideal of universal benevolence associated with it by Schopenhauer and the Hindoos; and how, under the concurrent influence of Wagner and the Greeks, he had sought to concentrate the passion for disinterested self-devotion on the systematic culture of genius. Unfortunately, the only two great men that he recognised as such in recent history had both proved false guides; and this seems in the first instance to have made him distrust genius as a social danger. Its worship,

he remarks, is a survival of the adoration formerly given to gods, and to kings as their representatives. "The elevation of individuals into superhuman beings encourages the idea that large sections of the people are baser and more barbarous than they really are."[1] Genius even "acts as an enemy of truth by keeping up an intense ardour of conviction and discouraging the cautious and modest tone of science";[2] while "never to have changed one's opinions is the sign of having remained in a belated stage of culture."[3]

As a consequence of the new departure, science, so lately denounced for its coldness and dryness, now takes the place of art as the leading means of culture. Before the breach with Wagner signs of a growing preference for pure knowledge had not been wanting. We had been told in a truly positivist spirit that "the proper question for philosophy is to determine how far things are unalterable; the task of improving them, in so far as they can be improved, may then be fearlessly undertaken."[4] The note of moral enthusiasm will not be overlooked. It had already been associated with a higher standard of intellectualism in the reminder that "the most fearful sufferings have been brought on mankind by the impulse to be just without judgment; so that nothing is more requisite for the general welfare than the widest possible dissemination of judgment."[5]

Wagner was intensely German, intensely anti-French; and Nietzsche, when he wrote about the

[1] *WW.*, II., p. 340. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 411.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 407. [4] *WW.*, I., p. 514.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 329.

origin of tragedy, shared his patriotic views. He then looked forward to "the regeneration of the German soul by the elimination of every Latin element under the external stimulus of the last war, and inwardly by the example of Luther, together with all our great poets and artists."[1] His expectations were not fulfilled; at any rate, Germany was not regenerated, but the contrary; and it is remarkable that, on looking back in 1878 to the period after the war, what most offended him was the moral corruption of his countrymen. Their notions of right and wrong were unsettled; their rage for luxury and enjoyment knew no bounds; their sensuality was disgusting; nearly every German had become a degree more dishonest, sycophantic, avaricious, and frivolous than before.[2] A general lowering of intellectual standards is also complained of, but this is only another symptom of moral decay. With Wagner the last hope failed, and Nietzsche turned to foreign countries, especially to England and France, for what Germany could not supply.

In the writings of the second period the references to England are particularly complimentary. She is "now [1877–1878] unmistakably ahead of all other nations in philosophy, natural science, history, discoveries, and the spread of culture." This is due to the strength of individual character, resulting from a long national inheritance, enjoyed by her great men of science, and from their independence of learned association.[3] Furthermore, "we must allow English writers the credit of having

[1] *WW.*, I., pp. 164-65. [2] *WW.*, XI., pp. 94-95.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

made admirable contributions towards an ideal scientific literature for the people. *Their* handbooks are the work of their most distinguished scholars—men of whole-minded, rich, and generous natures."[1] Nor is it only among men of learning that this strength of character is exhibited. "English artisans work hard at their trade not merely for profit but for power, and not merely for power but for the utmost freedom and individual distinction."[2] Schopenhauer is now praised for the appreciation of hard facts, the determination to be clear and reasonable, that often make him seem so much of an Englishman and so little of a German."[3]

Everything written at this time bears what on the Continent is called a positivist impress. Nietzsche does not seem to have read Comte, but he refers admiringly to him as "that great and honest Frenchman with whom no German or English thinker can compare for comprehension and mastery of the exact sciences," while totally rejecting the religious and constructive element of his teaching.[4] For himself our philosopher professes to know little about the results of science; "but that little has been inexhaustibly serviceable in clearing up obscurities and abolishing former modes of thought and action."[5] As the quintessence of our positive knowledge three propositions are stated: (1) There is no God; (2) there is no moral world—*i.e.*, no retribution for good or evil conduct; (3) good and evil are determined by the

[1] *WW.*, III., p. 102. [2] *WW.*, II., p. 357.
[3] *WW.*, V., p. 130. [4] *WW.*, IV., pp. 348–49.
[5] *WW.*, XI., p. 402.

ideals and directions of life, the best part of these being inherited, but with a possibility that the resulting judgments may be falsified by the demands of our actual ideals.[1] With the disappearance of theism pessimism ceases to have any meaning. The world is neither good nor bad; such notions apply only to human beings, and in their ordinary acceptation cannot rightly be applied even to these.[2] For "free will is an illusion";[3] "that intelligible freedom" under cover of which Schopenhauer sought to rehabilitate moral responsibility is a fable;[4] and "the thing in itself" an illegitimate inference from phenomena.[5] In fact, Schopenhauer's metaphysic was simply a revival of mediæval Christianity, due to want of scientific knowledge.[6]

At first the new ardour for destructive criticism extends to morality, which we are told in so many words is annihilated together with religion by our way of looking at things.[7] But the reason given is merely that science can admit no motives except pleasure and pain, usefulness and injury.[8] Such an arbitrary restriction seems itself to be a survival of theology; and, in fact, it is traceable to the French freethinking literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which Nietzsche was now studying with delight. He observes truly enough that "in the metaphysical sense there are no sins, but also no virtues,"[9] without remembering that metaphysical values have been abolished. His aphoristic method had the advantage of making

[1] *WW.*, XI., p. 334. [2] *WW.*, II., p. 46. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 36.
[4] P. 63. [5] Pp. 31 *sq.* [6] P. 44.
[7] *WW.*, II., p. 52. [8] *Loc. cit.* [9] *Ibid.*, p. 77.

composition easy for himself and fruitful of easy reading for others; but, combined with the passion of the higher German intellect for self-contradiction, it involves him in hopeless confusions of thought.

In accordance with this mental habit the destructive criticism of morality is interspersed with appeals to moral motives and standards, or is even carried on with their aid. As a conclusive argument against unselfishness we are told that "to be always acting for others is almost as mischievous as to act against them: it is a forcible intrusion on their sphere of action.....Not to think of others, but always to be acting most strictly for one's self, is a high sort of morality. The world is imperfect because so much is done for others."[1] An ex-gunner might have remembered that the way to hit a distant mark is not to aim straight at it. A false and fussy altruism is not the alternative to taking exclusive care of number one. "Love mankind! But I say, rejoice in mankind, and therefore help to produce the sort of people in whom we can rejoice! The right morality is to seek out and encourage those who delight us, and to fly from the others. Let the wretched, the misshapen, and the degenerate die out. They should not be kept alive at any price."[2] Our fastidious friend must have come across many unlovely sights when serving in the ambulance corps before Metz; we may assume that they did not impress him as a reason for shirking his duty. It may be said that wounded soldiers are frequently strong, healthy men, capable of returning to their work after

[1] *WW.*, XI., pp. 310–11. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 313, 314.

proper treatment. But the same is true of many patients in our civil hospitals whose services would be lost to the community but for modern philanthropy. No hard-and-fast line can be drawn between those cases and the case of those whose continued existence is altogether undesirable. What we know is that the passion of pity, on the whole, subserves race-interests, and that it cannot be kept up at full strength unless, as with other passions, there is enough to overflow and go to waste. It is a question whether Nietzsche himself was not a degenerate ; it is certain that he had to give up his work as a professor, owing to ill-health, in a few years ; and that his literary work could hardly have been continued without the help of a small retiring pension from the university. Let me add that he had been a singularly devoted teacher, among other things gratuitously preparing students "from the interior of Switzerland" for their examinations in philosophy. In private life his character was gentle, kind, and sympathetic—to a greater extent, indeed, than he personally would have liked it to be—and his attacks on altruism were, perhaps, inspired by a consciousness of the injury it had done his health. We may also attribute to his unfortunate personal experiences the prophecy that hygienics will be a prime interest in the society of the future.[1]

Throughout the second, or scientific period, morality continues a paramount preoccupation. There is no antithesis between increase of knowledge and increase of human welfare ; on the

[1] *WW.*, XI., p. 69.

contrary, they are mutually subservient. Faith in the supreme utility of science and of its possessors should take the place of faith in mere numbers.[1] But the observations out of which science is built are themselves conditioned by sincerity and rectitude. "Even in the region of sense-perception there are none but moral experiences."[2] "The history of science exhibits the victory of noble impulses; there is much morality concerned in its pursuit."[3] "It is a mistake to estimate philosophers as artists, leaving out of sight their justice and self-control."[4] "Unfortunately we shall never know the best thing about genius, the self-control and self-discipline exercised in bringing its powers into play."[5] "Hurrah for physical science, and a double hurrah for the honesty that forces us to study it!"[6]

As may be gathered from some of the passages just quoted, general utility is the end of moral action. But morality need not therefore be impersonal. On the contrary, we best serve our true advantage by moral action.[7] Benevolence and beneficence make up the good man—but they should begin with himself.[8] The greatest wonders of antique morality, Epictetus for instance, knew nothing about that altruism which is so fashionable nowadays.[9] Nietzsche as a professional Hellenist was fascinated by Greek ethics, and the influence of its masters is shown in more than one reference. Epicurus counts among the greatest of men;[10] we have not advanced beyond him, but his

[1] *WW.*, III., p. 155. [2] *WW.*, V., p. 155. [3] *WW.*, XI., p. 204.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 408. [5] *WW.*, IV., p. 357. [6] *WW.*, V., p. 258.
[7] *WW.*, II., p. 96. [8] *WW.*, IV., p. 336. [9] *Ibid.*, p. 133.
[10] *WW.*, III., p. 355.

dominion has been infinitely extended.[1] Aristotle is not named; but we find his doctrine of moral habit passionately reasserted as against Luther's doctrine of justification by faith.[2] And it is made a charge against our system of classical education that we are exercised in no single antique virtue as the ancients were exercised in it.[3] As the consolations of Christianity evaporate the consolations of ancient philosophy are revived in new splendour.[4]

Ours is, indeed, an age of comparison and selection, an age which, discarding all provincialism in conduct as in art, bids us look round among the historic civilisations with a view to constructing a higher morality from the forms and habits offered to our choice.[5] Now it is precisely the adherence to an unreasoned tradition that mankind have generally regarded as the distinctive note of morality; so that when Nietzsche first called himself an immoralist, what he meant to emphasise was his defiance of tradition as such, his demand for a reasonable basis of action. Such a basis is not supplied by an appeal to our moral feelings, for these are nothing better than inherited judgments. To trust them is to trust your grandmother and her grandmother rather than the gods within you, your reason and your experience.[6]

All this sounds commonplace enough to a reader of Bentham and Mill; just as Descartes and Montesquieu may have sounded commonplace to the readers of Bacon and Locke. And when Nietzsche proclaimed the supremacy of England in

[1] *WW.*, XI., p. 168. [2] *WW.*, IV., p. 30. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 187.
[4] *WW.*, XI., p. 168. [5] *WW.*, II., p. 41. [6] *WW.*, IV., p. 41.

philosophy it was probably to English ethics that he referred. Universalistic hedonism is not, I think, anywhere stated in terms, but its elements are freely scattered through his notes. There is, he tells us, no instinct of self-preservation; every action interpreted as evidence of such may be explained by the search for agreeable and the avoidance of disagreeable sensations. Speaking generally, we only wish for objects because they are associated with agreeable states of feeling in ourselves.[1] Men might be estimated by the degree of happiness they are capable of experiencing or communicating.[2] One of the charges brought against "morality" is that it has represented self-delight as offensive, self-torment as acceptable to the deity.[3] On the other hand, culture is an expression of happiness.[4] The joy felt in absorbing new ideas should be carried so far as to outweigh all other kinds of pleasure.[5] Noble and magnanimous natures experience some feelings of pleasure and pain so strongly that the intellect is either silenced or made instrumental to them.[6] Nor is happiness by any means so rare as pessimists would have us believe. The world abounds in good will; and the constant little every-day manifestations of this impulse, taking the form of good humour, friendliness, and unaffected courtesy, contribute enormously to the happiness of life.[7] "It needs a life full of pain and renunciation to teach us that existence is saturated with honey."[8] In short, "there is no life without

[1] *WW.*, XI., pp. 253 and 292.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 367.
[3] P. 263.
[4] P. 316.
[5] P. 403.
[6] *WW.*, V., pp. 39, 40.
[7] *WW.*, II., p. 71.
[8] *WW.*, XI., p. 154.

pleasure; the fight for pleasure is the fight for life."[1] This view does not exclude morality, for each one is called good or evil according to the way in which he carries on the fight; and that depends on the degree and quality of his intellect[2]—a saying elucidated by the remark made elsewhere that no honey is sweeter than the honey of knowledge; so that he who has spent his life in its acquisition first discovers in old age how well he has obeyed the voice of Nature, the Nature that governs all things by pleasure.[3]

We saw how Nietzsche at first looked on the discovery that action depended absolutely on pleasure and pain as destructive of morality. But he did not long hold to that crude interpretation of ethical science; for we find a passage belonging to the same period, and much more consistent with its general tone, in which he tells us that joy must exercise a healthy and reparative influence on man's moral nature, or why should the moments when we bathe in its sunshine be just those when the soul involuntarily pledges herself to be good and to become perfect?[4] And, as a substitute for religious exercises, he proposes immediately on wakening in the morning to think how we may give pleasure to at least one human being in the course of the day.[5]

Assuming happiness, understood as pleasure and the absence of pain, to be desired by all—to be, indeed, the only thing desirable—it would seem to follow that utilitarianism is the only rational method of ethics; and it might have been expected that Nietzsche, speculating as he did under the

[1] *WW.*, II., p. 107. [2] *Loc. cit.* [3] P. 267.
[4] *WW.*, III., p. 166. [5] *WW.*, II., p. 385.

combined influence of Greek and English thought, would have frankly accepted its principles, preserving, of course, complete liberty with regard to the adjustment of details. What prevented him from taking that step was the pervadingly sceptical and negative cast of his intellect, aggravated, as in the case of Coleridge, of whom otherwise he often reminds one, by the use of deleterious drugs and by solitary habits. According to him, there can be no moral law binding on all mankind unless we can prove that there is some universal end of action; and such an end does not exist. Pleasure will not supply it, for the pleasures of sensitive beings vary with the degree of their development,[1] and happiness is pursued by opposite paths.[2] Oddly enough, the second of these considerations is directed by name against Spencer, than whom none would have more cordially accepted it. Soon afterwards the most complete development of individuality is proposed as an end, characteristically enough without reference to the priority of Spencer and Mill in this direction. It is true that Mill had certainly, and Spencer probably, taken his cue from Wilhelm von Humboldt; but Nietzsche never betrays any acquaintance with that thinker, and the way in which he associates his own individualism with the theory of evolution seems to place Spencer's leading beyond a doubt.[3]

After all, the effort to get rid of a moral law speedily results in its rehabilitation. For, as a means for increasing the number of those happy accidents on which future developments depend, it

[1] *WW.*, IV., pp. 102 *sq.* [2] XI., p. 233.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 238 and 330.

is recommended that we should maintain the utmost variety of conditions under which human beings can exist ;[1] and this would surely necessitate a code of social justice to begin with, as Spencer pointed out long ago in *Social Statics,* and as Professor Juvalta, of Pavia, is never weary of insisting on at the present day, although his theory, unlike Spencer's, is penetrated with socialistic ideas.

Nietzsche himself, when he has to combat socialist demands, is not slow to quote justice as a recognised social obligation. Admitting that the present distribution of property results from innumerable acts of injustice and violence in the past, he deprecates the repetition of similar acts in modern times, setting his hopes rather on a general increase in the sense of justice, and a diminution of violent impulses all round.[2]

As a last homage to the received morality, a note dating from the year 1880 may be mentioned, in which Napoleon is called the greatest of men, if his aim had been the good of humanity.[3]

Not long after abandoning the cultivation of genius as a universal end, Nietzsche seems to have taken up and substituted for it the idea, so prominent in his last period, of breeding a superior race. Here, again, the Hellenic influence is prominent. In a fragment dating from 1876 the Greeks are quoted as an example of what may be done in the way of intellectual stimulation by the self-consciousness of such a race in the midst of a barbarous population.[4] English science and philosophy, for which so much enthusiasm is expressed, would no

[1] P. 239.
[2] *WW.*, II., pp. 334 *sq.*
[3] *WW.*, XI., p. 387.
[4] P. 33.

doubt act powerfully in the same direction through the doctrine of evolution, which is known to have interested Nietzsche intensely at this time. In this connection much has been made of his debt to Darwin; but, as he never understood the theory of natural selection, it seems more likely that the decisive influence came from Spencer, whose psychology he certainly accepted to the extent of describing knowledge as a nervous modification produced by the action of external objects on our organs of sense, without any co-operation from the mind.[1] Now, Spencer from the beginning was interested in evolution much less as an explanation of the past than as a promise of the future—as a pledge that human life might rise to a far more perfect harmony between organism and environment than any yet attained; and on this side his philosophy would appeal strongly to Nietzsche, as also on its individualistic side, with which we have seen him to be in complete agreement. Indeed, he brings the two into direct association by asking: "Is not every individual an attempt to reach a higher species than man?"[2] It is here, rather than in the youthful worship of genius, which his disgust with Wagner led him to repudiate, that we can lay our finger on the genesis of the superman.

It has been disputed whether the superman was intended by his prophet to stand for a new animal species, or for a new and improved variety of human being, or, finally, for a sporadic type of individual excellence, cropping up occasionally in the existing state of civilisation. So far as the

[1] P. 275. [2] P. 238.

name and notion have become popular, it seems to be generally understood in the last sense. The superman is commonly identified with a coxcomb whose opinion of his own superiority to the rest of the species is only equalled by his contempt for the ordinary obligations of morality. Such pretensions are not new; and it would be strange if Nietzsche had no higher ambition than to re-edit them under a more pompous appellation. In fact, it very much disgusted him to find that the watchword of his philosophy should be used to procure admittance for degenerate types, with whom he sympathised even less than with the unregenerate Philistine. Nothing like the superman had ever turned up in his own experience; whether history had offered any examples of his ideal remains doubtful. On this point the language of Zarathustra is perfectly explicit, and if taken alone would settle the question. According to the prophet under whose name Nietzsche speaks, when the greatest and the smallest are stripped and compared they show themselves too fatally alike, and both of them all too human. In a later work Napoleon seems to be mentioned as an exception, but an exception that proves the rule, being a combination of the superman with the brute.[1]

Napoleon, in fact, embodied the formidable alternative confronting us at the present day. The human race represents a transitional stage of unstable equilibrium. We must either go back to the brute or on to the superman.[2] And the choice is not doubtful. Our very first article of

[1] *WW.*, VI., p. 133, and VII., p. 337. [2] *WW.*, XII., p. 210.

faith is the duty of not relapsing into a savage and anti-social state.[1] Therefore, the new beings can only be conceived as a multitude; goodness can only be developed among equals.[2]

It remains to be decided whether we are to conceive the superman as a new animal species, differing not less from the actual human species than that differs from the anthropoid ape, or merely as a new race, related to the modern European somewhat as the Greeks were related to the barbarians among whom they settled. This seems to be a point on which, as on various others, our prophet had no scruple about changing his mind without caring to acknowledge the change either to others or to himself. To my mind at least, there cannot be the faintest doubt that when he wrote *Zarathustra* his wish was to represent the superman as a new animal species to be evolved by artificial selection from man. I know that his sister and biographer, Madame Förster-Nietzsche, refuses to accept this interpretation; but it is significant that she can only get rid of the relevant texts by explaining them away as poetical metaphors. Unfortunately for her interpretation, when Nietzsche talks in parables he makes them unmistakably parabolical. We find ourselves among a motley assemblage of rope-dancers, lions, adders, tarantulas, kings, beggars, and other mythical properties needless to enumerate. But every now and then this rather wearisome entertainment is relieved by the expression of plain ideas in plain language, quite familiar to us from their recurrence

[1] *WW.*, XII., p. 52. [2] P. 210.

in the author's other works, where, as Cassandra says, the oracle looks out not like a bride behind her veil, but like wind-driven waves against a rising sun. And foremost among these is the idea of a new species, a superman to be evolved from man, or, in the still more telling phrase once let fall, a super-race from the race.[1]

We have not now to discuss the feasibility of the idea. What has to be pointed out as the most interesting and attractive element in the work where it first appeared is the fire of moral enthusiasm burning through the prophecies from beginning to end. "Zarathustra has found no greater power on earth than good and evil."[2] But as yet this power has been wasted, because it was not directed towards the attainment of a single ideal. "There have been a thousand aims because there have been a thousand peoples. Humanity is still without an aim. And to be without that is to be without itself."[3]

That all men should combine for one end is not hopeless, for they already combine in smaller groups. "Regard for the interest of the herd or the community is older than self-interest. The individual is a most recent creation. So long as a good conscience represents the herd, only the bad conscience says 'I.' Truly the sly and loveless self that seeks its own profit in the profit of others is not the beginning but the end of the herd."[4]

At no time of life did his Hellenism make Nietzsche an admirer of the modern State; and at this period he positively foams at the mouth with

[1] *WW.*, VI., p. 111.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 84.
[3] P. 87.
[4] P. 86.

hatred for it. The people and the herd may be fit objects of faith and love; never the State, although it impudently claims to be the people, which is not deceived, but hates it as "a sin against morals and rights." There are many languages of good and evil, but it lies in them all. "All that it says is a lie, and all that it possesses has been stolen." Even those who vanquished the old god fall a prey to the snares of the new idol that promises to give them all if they will worship it; "so it buys the splendour of your virtue and the gaze of your proud eyes." The State must cease to exist before real manhood can begin; much more, before the way to the superman can be prepared.[1]

What is the justification of this violent language? We may assume that the State discourages the growth of individuality; and as, according to Zarathustra, it was invented for the benefit of the "superfluous classes," it is apparently made responsible for their continued existence, while they in turn naturally support it.

Evidently, however, what Nietzsche most dreads and detests is not the mischief done by the modern State in suppressing individualism and favouring the survival of degenerates, but the fact that as a real, living, visible, attractive unity it enters into formidable competition with the glorified individuality of his imaginary superman. Michelet has pointed out that the giant Gargantua was nothing less than the New Monarchy of the Renaissance; and one has only to think of him as coming into conflict with Cæsar Borgia, whom Nietzsche

[1] Pp. 69-72.

regards as the highest individual product of that age, to see which party would win. Indeed, the Duke of Valentinois, like another and greater Cæsar, was, from his German admirer's point of view, a traitor to the individualistic cause, the great ambition of his life having been to establish the New Monarchy in the Pontifical States, if not, as Machiavelli hoped, over the whole of a reunited Italy. Neither he nor Alcibiades nor any other of the same class has ever been content to "exist beautifully"; nor do they seem inclined to tolerate the existence of any other such paragons by their side.

Here, then, at first starting, we find the idea of the superman afflicted with an immanent self-contradiction in the best Hegelian style. Conceived as an individual, he at once establishes a levelling despotism, thus sublating the very type that he represents. Conceived as a class, he perishes by internecine strife.[1] And close behind this comes a second self-contradiction, afflicting the means proposed, or rather suggested, for bringing the ideal into existence. As already mentioned, they consist in an appeal to moral motives, in the proposal to create a new enthusiasm of humanity, uniting and directing towards a single end all the tremendous forces that now work for a multitude of conflicting ends. Now, this demand assumes the existence in the human race, as a whole, of such passionate self-devotion, combined with such cool, unerring judgment, as no example of has been found in the

[1] The condottieri whom Cæsar Borgia treacherously massacred at Sinigaglia were "higher men" of a sort, though not so high as he was.

past. For it must be a devotion capable of sacrificing every other end to the achievement of this one end—an end, too, of which as yet there has been no experience, and an end involving, as no other thing sought after has ever involved, the total disappearance of the race that has brought it about. And the judgment called into play for that purpose must find the means for evolving a new animal species — a task to which human ingenuity, operating on the most passive and plastic materials, has never yet found itself equal. Surely, a race so splendidly endowed with the noblest capacities of intellect, heart, and will as to answer Zarathustra's call would deserve a better fate than such self-annulment, would itself have anticipated the superman, and would require all the running it could make to keep in the same place.

It so happens that we can lay our finger on the initial error whence these monstrous consequences arose. Much as Nietzsche hated Germany, he hated England more; and with the rather discreditable object, I fear, of depreciating England and her great naturalist, he tries to show that without Hegel there would have been no Darwin. For, according to him, the German philosopher, by teaching that specific notions were evolved out of one another, prepared the scientific intellect of Europe to entertain the idea of organic development.[1] Historically there is, of course, no foundation for such a claim. Evolutionism was hereditary in the Darwin family, and goes back to a time before Hegel; while Hegel himself took the idea

[1] *WW.*, V., p. 300.

of development from Schelling, who in turn owed it to the naturalists of his time. What I wish to point out, however, is not the historical error, but the profound misconception of organic evolution that it betrays. Hegel's theory of logical development is determined by the idea that the lower notion suffers from an inherent self-contradiction, in consequence of which it falls to pieces and spontaneously gives birth to the higher notion. With Darwin, on the contrary, the decay and death of the old species are not the antecedent, but the consequence, of its having given birth to the new species, with which it is unable to compete. And this very internecine strife is another point of distinction between the two processes. Hegel's notions only perish in an ideal sense. In the actual life of logic they survive and continue to play a useful part in the economy of thought.

Applying the result to Nietzsche's philosophy, we now see how, under an illusive show of Darwinian biology, he really evolves superman from man on the lines of Hegelian dialectic. That is to say, the old human species, in awakening to the consciousness of its degeneracy, overcomes and supersedes itself, thus calling the new superhuman species into being. Thus the pessimism of his youth becomes unexpectedly justified as an ideal expression of race-suicide preparatory to a better state of things.

I have said that Nietzsche hated England; and it may be thought that this is inconsistent with the praises he lavished on her in his second or scientific period. But the revulsion merely repeats in a much less excusable form his earlier revolt from

Wagner and Schopenhauer. It belongs to an unpleasant habit he had of kicking down the ladder by which he had climbed up. He could not forgive the English thinkers for what he owed them; and the "profound mediocrity of the English intellect"—represented presumably by Shakespeare, Newton, Chatham, and Byron—is charged with having caused a deep depression of the European intellect as a whole, but more particularly of the French intellect. This very mediocrity, however, enables the English to perform important services for which men of genius are incapacitated by their splendid disregard of facts. Darwin, Mill, and Herbert Spencer, being the men to whom he personally owed most, are particularly mentioned in this connection as examples of useful dulness.[1] Of the three Spencer seems to have had the largest share in ultimately determining Nietzsche's philosophy, and so he is never mentioned without some expression of contemptuous disagreement. English utilitarianism is the foundation of his ethics; and therefore it is savagely denounced as a canting, hypocritical attempt to secure the greatest happiness of England under pretence of pursuing the greatest happiness of all. In England itself the standard of happiness among moral philosophers is comfort, fashion, and a seat in Parliament.[2] Gizicki once congratulated a German critic for having performed the rare feat of attacking utilitarianism without forgetting the manners of a gentleman. This admirable exception could not have been our aristocratic immoralist.

[1] *WW.*, VII., p. 223. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 184.

Throughout his second period Nietzsche, besides being a utilitarian in the wide sense of judging actions by their consequences, had also been a hedonist—that is, he had considered happiness (or pleasure) as a universally desired and absolutely desirable thing, although at the same time as a thing too indefinite to be made a standard for the unification of human life. The desire of domination, on the other hand, is mentioned in a note bearing the date of 1880 as often a symptom of weakness.[1] Within a year we find the first intimation of his final doctrine, that power is the *summum bonum* and love of power the universal motive, in an aphorism setting forth (for the rest without an attempt to demonstrate it) that, whether we give pleasure or pain to others, it is solely for the purpose of satisfying our love of power.[2] A little later still, Zarathustra proclaims power as a new virtue, a new standard of good and evil.[3] It is not so very new, being borrowed, as usual without acknowledgment, from an English philosopher, Hobbes; and besides that Nietzsche, in his later writings, especially in the uncompleted *Wille zur Macht*, assumes that power is what everyone really wants and has always wanted. Everyone—with a single striking exception. "Men do not strive for happiness—only Englishmen";[4] though elsewhere our people are associated, in this contemptible pursuit, with "shopkeepers, Christians, cows, women, and other democrats."[5] Nevertheless, "every healthy morality is dominated by an instinct of life";[6] "an action imposed by the vital

[1] *WW.*, XI., p. 405. [2] *WW.*, V., p. 50 *sq.* [3] *WW.*, VI., p. 112.
[4] *WW.*, VIII., p. 62. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 149. [6] P. 88.

instinct is proved to be right by the pleasure it gives";[1] "everything good is instinctive, and therefore easy, necessary, free";[2] "pleasure is a feeling of power; to exclude the emotions is to exclude those conditions which give the feeling of power, and therefore of pleasure at its highest."[3] Herbert Spencer would not have dissented in principle from this statement; but then he would not, like his critic, have distinguished between happiness and pleasure, which two other Englishmen, Wordsworth and Ruskin, would have identified with "vital feelings of delight." Can Nietzsche have been ignorant that the gospel of health, with its accompanying condemnation of the sickly and helpless, had been preached before him in *The Data of Ethics?*

On the other hand, Spencer would have emphatically dissented from such a statement as that "egoism belongs to the essence of the distinguished soul; I mean the immovable belief that other beings must be naturally subject to a being like us, and have to sacrifice themselves to it; a relationship which the distinguished soul accepts as founded on the primary law of things."[4] Nor would he have allowed that the conquest and spoliation of the weaker by the stronger was the very principle of society and of life itself.[5] But he might have fairly challenged the Prussian philosopher to reconcile these crudities with the admonition given elsewhere: "Learn betimes to discard the supposed individual; to discover the errors of the ego; to feel cosmically about the me

[1] P. 226. [2] P. 93. [3] *W. z. M.*, p. 240.
[4] *WW.*, VII., pp. 251–52. [5] *Ibid.*, pp. 237–38.

and thee."[1] Or, again, why should Zarathustra compare unfavourably the vulgar who want to live *gratis* with men like himself, who are always thinking what best thing they can give in exchange for the life they have received, and who condemn the wish to enjoy without giving enjoyment in return?[2]

Among his other adventures, Zarathustra falls in with an imbecile hedonistic moralist, who is accosting a herd of kine with the object of inducing them to disclose the secret of their happiness.[3] It does not seem to have struck the prophet that these cows had a logic as well as an ethic, or that, if the pasturing animals were too gentle to toss him on the horns of a dilemma, a savage bull might have been invited in for the purpose. If self-interest is the law of life, with what right can the present generation be called on to sacrifice themselves for the evolution of a superior race? If there is a moral law prescribing self-devotion, how can it be our duty to create what the highest of our contemporaries would call a devil?[4]

If Nietzsche ever contemplated the idea of evolving a higher animal species than man, he soon gave it up. His last work, *The Anti-Christian,* puts the problem quite clearly, as, not "what is to succeed man?" but—"what kind of man ought to be desired and bred as the more valuable, the more worthy of life, the more certain of a future?"[5] And he proceeds to state, in direct contradiction to Zarathustra, that the desirable type has often presented itself in history, but never

[1] *WW.*, XII. p. 74. [2] *WW.*, VI., pp. 291 *sq.*
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 389 *sq.* [4] P. 213. [5] *WW.*, VIII., p. 218.

as the result of a conscious effort, while the effect of prevalent opinions has long been to repress or extinguish it. Two agencies in particular have hitherto worked with fatal effect in this direction—morality and Christianity. He therefore applies himself with a holy zeal to the destruction of both, his intellect being indeed much better fitted for the work of pulling down than for the work of building up.

The attack on morality, by which is meant the doctrine of universal benevolence, proceeds on the lines of the historical method, and rests on the false assumption that a belief is refuted by showing how it came to exist. Such a method, were it generally applied, would ruin every belief without exception, as all beliefs have a history, and even the scepticism that displaced them would share their fate. As it happens, however, the historical explanation offered of the current distinction between good and evil in conduct is entirely false. It is the work of a mere classical philologist, and a very imperfectly informed one at that. His thesis is that the valuations of character and action were originally fixed by the ruling caste in society, those qualities of health, strength, beauty, courage, liberality, and truthfulness which were most conspicuous in its members being approved of, while the distinguishing qualities of their serfs were proportionately despised. In those right-minded ages to be strong and successful was the great merit, to be weak and a failure the great vice. As the subject classes had become enslaved through their weakness, they set up a rival scale of values in which pity, the correlative and consolation of

weakness, occupied the highest place, while the virtues of their betters were disparaged, their rightful claims on the labourers treated as wicked spoliation, and their favoured position assailed with vindictive envy.

The aristocratic and chivalrous virtues maintain their ascendancy during that chronic state of war by which they are at once originated and preserved. Prolonged peace, on the other hand, creates a fatal split in the ruling body, and undermines its ideals by favouring the development of a priesthood, and enabling it to dispute the supremacy of the warrior caste. For a priestly life, being conducive to physical degeneracy, breeds all the mental characteristics of a weak race, thus throwing the priests out of sympathy with the warriors, and making them the natural allies of the servile herd whose scale of values they adopt and systematise into a code.

It would seem that, according to Nietzsche's reading of history, which, however, is nowhere given as a connected whole, the first essay towards organising a servile or gregarious ethic was made in Greece by Socrates, himself a man of the people, and afflicted with the characteristic vices of his class, one of these being a morbid disposition to substitute self-conscious reasoning for instinct. Under his corrupting influence Plato, an aristocrat of genius but born with the soul of a Semitic priest, proceeded to work out a theory of values based on supernatural sanctions, in which the right of the stronger, vigorously but vainly defended by those genuine champions of old Hellenic ideals, the Sophists, is subordinated to

the interest of the masses; a pestilent doctrine which, in company with an equally morbid asceticism, became more or less current in all the later schools of Greek philosophy.

More, however, was needed than a false philosophy to secure the final victory of servile over seignoral values. The Jews, a race of slaves and priests combined, managed to impose their degrading morality on the civilised world by appealing to the instincts of the lowest classes in the Roman Empire under the name of Christianity. This must not be confounded with the genuine teaching of Jesus, a religion in which supernaturalism had no place, and which perished with its author on Calvary. What carried all before it was Paul's theology, in which the idyllic domestic morality of the Jewish Diaspora is artfully combined with a scheme for giving envious plebeians their revenge on the rich in another world.

In modern times Christianity has transmitted its *moralin* virus to utilitarianism—an essentially gregarious ethical system, first founded by the sickly Jewish artisan Spinoza, and further developed by the plebeian English race, of which Buckle, with his cheap and noisy eloquence, is a characteristic type. For, let there be no mistake about it, what we call "modern ideas" do not come from the essentially aristocratic French people, but from the plebeian English.[1]

As we learn from his letters, Nietzsche was in early youth a careful student of Theognis;[2] and his theory of the two moralities, servile and

[1] *WW.*, VII., pp. 224 and 307.

[2] *Briefe*, I., p. 2.

seignoral, or gregarious and egregious (taking the second word in its Latin or Italian sense), seems to have been suggested, in the first instance, by that aristocratic elegist's bitter complaint of the change in language brought about by the democratic revolution in Megara. An improvement in their condition, he tells us, has turned the ignorant rustics from bad to good ; while reverses of fortune have given an evil name to the quondam nobles. In reference to these passages Welcker, quoted by Grote, observes that the political, as distinguished from the ethical, sense of good and bad, fell into desuetude through the influence of the Socratic philosophy, which, according to the same authority, first popularised those terms as ethical qualifications.[1] However this may be, there is no evidence that the personal revaluation brought a change of moral values in its train, nor that either then or afterwards a change in the relative estimate of the different virtues took place. Least of all does it appear that either pity or vindictiveness was a peculiar characteristic of the lower orders. Theognis is thirsting to drink the blood of his enemies, in what Nietzsche would call a truly plebeian spirit ; and he particularly reproaches his young favourite Cyrnos for not grieving long over the sufferings of his friends. Indeed, Homer alone would prove that tenderness and sympathy were qualities highly valued among the best-born Greeks ; while the oath taken by every member of an oligarchic club during the revolutionary period, "to do the Demos all the harm he could," is

[1] Grote's *History of Greece*, II., pp. 419 *sq.*

evidence that resentment flourished to the full as much among the hawks as among the lambs.

It would be more true to say that different classes have different and contrasted vices than that they have different and contrasted virtues—or values, if the latter term be preferred. And we may admit that insolence and cruelty are more characteristic of a ruling, meanness and mendacity of a servile, class, while contending that the permanent public opinion of both classes makes for the consecration of courage and gentleness all round. Indeed, the very word "gentleness" is a historical lesson in itself, proving that English aristocratic society, at least, discerned a peculiar connection between sweet manners and good birth.

As a young professor at Basel Nietzsche fully accepted Grote's vindication of the Sophists, although he failed to see that a far better case than Grote's might be made out for them as ethical reformers. In his latest phase he peremptorily, and without reason given, goes back on the old view, glorifying them as apostles of brute force.[1] In this connection also he accepts the Melian Dialogue—that masterpiece of tragic irony—as an expression of what Thucydides himself thought about public morality. There is no direct reference to Plato's Gorgias—a wise abstinence; for perhaps it would have involved him in the necessity of finding an answer to the unanswerable Socratic argument against Callicles, the real author of Nietzsche's distinction between gregarious and egregious morality. For, after appealing to natural

[1] *Cf. WW.*, X., p. 129, with *W. z. M.*, p. 235.

law in justification of the claim put forward by the superior man to subjugate and despoil the inferior, this cynical aristocrat has to admit that the many, by banding together, may and do gain the upper hand so decisively as to impose their standards on him. Callicles tries to get out of the difficulty by falling back on qualitative distinctions as constituting the right to rule; but this admission readmits moral values into the discussion, with the result that their supremacy over the whole of life has to be conceded.

Such is also the outcome of Nietzsche's efforts to get beyond good and evil. His objections to the received morality can only be accredited by an appeal to moral considerations of a still higher order. His polemic against pity for degenerates derives its whole strength from the argument that their survival and propagation impairs the life-enhancing qualities of the race. But if anyone chooses to say, "What do I care for the race?" his principles leave him without any answer, beyond a torrent of unconciliatory abuse.

In so far as popular religion is identified with popular morality, the attack on Christianity lays itself open to the same objection. Nor is that all. What gives such lustre to the whole argument and raises it as literature to the first rank among Nietzsche's writings is the moral passion displayed throughout; the constant invoking of truth as a precious thing violated by the Jewish and Christian priesthoods at every step in the propagation of their creed.

Whether his charges have or have not been made out is a question irrelevant to the present

discussion. What interests us to observe is that at any rate it did not lie in the mouth of a professed immoralist to make them. For they involve the assumption, to which he is not entitled, that there is such a thing as moral obligation, and that part of it is to speak the truth. Nietzsche had some glimmering of the difficulty; but he never worked out a consistent theory of the subject, and his language when he touches on it is still more illogical than elsewhere. Even before the days of Zarathustra some of his reasonings would have discredited a Conservative speaker opposing Bradlaugh's claim to be sworn.

> Our whole European morality falls to pieces with the death of God. Now, in disclaiming the will to deceive, we stand on moral principle. But supposing, as seems very probable, that all life rests on a basis of deception—what then? Would it not be Quixotic, and even worse to insist on veracity? Let there be no mistake about it; what fires us still, unbelievers and all, is the old Christian belief, which was also Plato's belief, that God is the truth—that truth is divine. How, then, if this should seem every day more incredible, if God himself should prove to be our oldest lie?[1]

At this rate, philosophers, whose chief business it is to investigate truth, might be expected to receive the news of their only guarantor's death with some dismay. On the contrary, they show an exultation which, in the circumstances, strikes one as rather indecent. "Our whole heart overflows with gratitude, wonder, and hopeful expectation."[2] Zarathustra is one of this jubilant band; but, then, he sees no connection between theism and intellectual honesty *(Redlichkeit)*; on the contrary, he

[1] *WW.*, V., pp. 271–276. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 272.

describes the latter as the latest born among the virtues, and hated, as knowledge also is hated, by those who have God on the brain. "Good," or what we call "goody," people "never tell the truth."[1] A note dating from the same period suggests the rather awkward compromise that we should have no conscience in respect to truth and error, in order that we may be able again to spend life in the service of truth and of the intellectual conscience.[2]

In the mass of notes collected for what was to have been his *magnum opus*, the *Wille zur Macht*, an untranslatable title which we may approximately render by *The Will to be Strong*, Nietzsche nearly anticipates Pragmatism. Indeed, it might seem to be completely anticipated in such sayings as that "truth is what exalts the human type";[3] "perhaps the categories of reason express nothing more than a definite advantage for the race or the species: their utility is their truth";[4] "our confidence in reason and its categories only proves that their utility for life has been shown by experience, not that they are 'true'";[5] were they not balanced by other passages of a distinctly intellectualist type, such as the assertion that "it is absolute want of intellectual honesty to estimate a belief by the way in which it works, not by its truth";[6] "intellectual honesty is the result of delicacy, valour, foresight, temperance, practised and accumulated through a long series of generations";[7] "[with Christianity] the question is not whether a thing is true, but how

[1] *WW.*, VI., pp. 44 and 293.
[2] *WW.*, XII., p. 63.
[3] P. 153.
[4] P. 274 *sq.*
[5] *Leben*, II., p. 775.
[6] *W. z. M.*, p. 120.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 245.

it works—which is an absolute want of intellectual honesty."[1]

On the whole, it would seem as if this extreme regard for veracity were only used as a means for discrediting religion, morality, and the Socratic philosophy. And their defenders might plausibly allege that they only used deception—when they used it—for a good end; that is to say, for an augmentation of vital power. "Everything for the army," as Colonel Henry said. It would have been more consistent, not to say honest, on the part of Nietzsche had he attacked the popular creed simply on the ground that it lowered the vitality of the species. Even on so narrow a basis the attack could not have been worked without an appeal to disinterested motives; in other words, without an appeal to morality. For a selfish religionist might well prefer the gratification of his mystical cravings, and a priest his ambition, to the health of the race. But here also our critic has thrown away his whole case by two most serious admissions. We have first a frank acknowledgment that "there is nothing diseased about the gregarious human being as such; on the contrary, he is of inestimable value, but incapable of self-guidance, and therefore in need of a shepherd, a need perfectly understood by priests."[2] "Petty virtues are needed for petty people";[3] and when the lower strata of the population are decadent "a religion of self-suppression, patience, and mutual help may be of the highest value."[4] Therefore, we "require that gregarious morality should be held absolutely sacred."[5] And,

[1] *Leben*, II., p. 719. [2] *W. z. M.*, p. 209. [3] *WW.*, VI., p. 246.
[4] *Leben*, II., p. 734. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 809.

secondly, we find a parallel acknowledgment that Christianity deserves great praise as "the genuine religion of the herd."[1] "The continued existence of the Christian ideal is most desirable. My object in making war on that chlorotic ideal was not to destroy it, but to put an end to its tyranny, and to make room for new and robuster ideals."[2] "Common people are only endurable when they are pious."[3] They are not likely to remain pious long where books like *The Anti-Christian* circulate freely.

In England we have had a good supply of those "robuster ideals," for which the German moralist wishes to find room; nor, by all accounts, are they wanting in America; yet he does not seem to have looked to either country for his models. His enormous self-esteem would have suffered by such a reference. It also affected his conception of the superman, who, in Nietzsche's last writings, no longer figures as a new species destined to succeed and displace the human species, but rather as a superior race, like the Greeks—with himself, one may suppose, as the most conspicuous example of their perfections. At first supermen are thought of, not as ruling over the inferior race, but as living apart from them, "like the gods of Epicurus."[4] But this view was soon found impracticable, and abandoned. Throughout the *Wille zur Macht* nothing is contemplated but a new aristocracy, a ruling race, whose sole business will, however, not be to rule, offering splendid examples of beauty, strength, and intelligence for the delectation of

[1] *WW.*, XIV., p. 336.
[2] *Leben*, II., p. 744.
[3] *WW.*, XII., p. 206.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 211.

themselves and of the lower orders.[1] Owing, presumably, to their wise administration, the labourers are to live as the middle class live now; but the higher caste above them will be distinguished for its abstinence.[2] This *élite* naturally falls into two divisions: a small body of supremely intellectual men performing the highest functions and leading the most perfect life, and, below them, an executive of soldiers and judges to relieve them of the rough work of government; while men of science and the majority of artists will find their appropriate place among the labouring classes.[3]

It has been mentioned how dependent Nietzsche was on the English moralists in his positivist period, and under what studied rudeness his sense of obligation was afterwards concealed. In his last or fourth period the debt to Plato is even more obvious, and his resentment is conveyed in the same way, only, as befits the occasion, with extraordinarily virulent abuse. Plato is "a great Cagliostro," an example of "the higher swindling," "a moral fanatic," a "poisoner of heathen innocence," and, worst of all, "tedious."[4]

It might be asked how a race of born rulers can be called into existence by suspending all the laws of morality, whether the duties of government are likely to be better performed by an aristocracy permanently emancipated from every social obligation, and, finally, whether these "dragon warriors from Cadmean teeth" are likely to keep the peace with each other longer than their fabled prototypes.

[1] *W. z. M.*, p. 414; *Leben*, p. 798.
[2] *WW.*, XII., p. 214. [3] *WW.*, VIII., pp. 302 *sq.*
[4] *W. z. M.*, pp. 234 and 244; *WW.*, VIII., p. 168.

But the *Wille zur Macht* opens a question of more practical importance for Nietzsche's philosophy than these. The theory adumbrated in that unfinished work seems to be that nature consists of nothing but energy; that the natural process consists in the appropriation of energy by one body at the expense of another; that the ascending line of organic development is determined by a continual gain, and the descending line by a continual loss, of energy; that, in so far as we can use such expressions as right and wrong, the right morality consists in preferring the qualities that make for vital energy, and wrong morality in preferring those that make for its decay.

So far there is nothing in this philosophy incompatible with the assumption that great individualities are the highest products of nature, and that their production is the worthiest object of human endeavour. Of course, it always remains open for Socrates, Plato, the present reviewer, or any other wretched decadent, to ask why we should scorn delights and live laborious days in order to promote the evolution of some future Cæsar Borgia. Supposing, however, that we accept the transvaluation of all values to that extent, a remorseless logic will impel us to go further, and make a united Italy, which was Borgia's own ambition, or a united Europe, which, according to Nietzsche, was Napoleon's ambition, or, finally, a united world, the object of our activity. I can quite imagine and sympathise with a valuation that counts human personality as the supreme thing, that says with Heracleitus, "one man is worth ten thousand if he be the best." Only Nietzsche bars himself out

from that valuation by his repeated assurances that personality is an illusion.[1] And it was by no freak of paradox that he took up this position. It was an essential part of his antitheistic polemic. According to him, the ascription of phenomena to a personal cause arises from the fallacious grammatical abstraction of subject and predicate, noun and verb. There is really no such break in the continuous stream of becoming. Nor is theism the only result of this mischievous error. By a still more fatal perversion, gregarious and Christian moralists, in their vindictive hostility to the rich and powerful, coined the false notion of personal responsibility, on the strength of which their oppressors were to be visited with everlasting punishment.[2]

If I may borrow an illustration from Schopenhauer, Nietzsche is like the magician who sent his familiar spirit to draw water, but knew no spell that could stop him, with the result that he and the whole country were drowned. Our modern Callicles has reformed himself, discarding the brutal licentiousness of his prototype, and even adopting the passwords of Plato's *Republic*. But it is all in vain. The terrible Socratic dialectic works on and on to his utter and overwhelming confusion. He appeals to Power, and to Power let him go. He invokes a superman, who will be found in the modern State; that State so decried by Zarathustra as the stronghold of the weak and defenceless. "By value is to be understood the conditions under which complex vital structures

[1] See, among other passages, *W. z. M.*, p. 369.
[2] *WW.*, VII., pp. 327-31.

are maintained and exalted."[1] So says morality also; but above the individual, however gifted, she places the State, and above the State a universal society whose object is the greatest good of all its members; a good which for purposes of convenience may be variously expressed in terms of pleasure, of life, of health, or of power, but in which the good of the parts ultimately coincides and identifies itself with the good of the whole.

I think something of this had begun to dawn on the noble spirit, to whom I have tried to be more just than he was to my teachers, before it went down under the waves of insanity. For among his later utterances this passage occurs: "In the whole process I find living morality, impelling force. It was an illusion to suppose I had transcended good and evil. Freethinking itself was a moral action, as honesty, as valour, as justice, and as love."[2] And this confession might have been extended with equal truth to his whole polemic against morality, involving as it did the re-affirmation of moral values in their full binding authority at every step in the evolution of the dialectical process by which they were to be undone.

[1] *Leben*, p. 790. [2] *WW.*, XIV., p. 312.

WHAT IS AGNOSTICISM?

To many—perhaps to most—readers it may seem as if the question "What is Agnosticism?" admitted of an obvious and easy answer. They will say that the term for which an explanation is asked was created by a master both of language and of thought, the late Professor Huxley; that he took pains on more than one occasion to define its significance, and that we ought to abide by his ruling.

If there are any such persons, I must demur to their contention. Words have a life of their own quite independent of their author's intentions, and they frequently come to bear a meaning very remote from that to which they were originally restricted. This is especially true of party names and controversial terms. The mere evolution of opinion is enough to carry them through an ever-changing series of associations. Many who now call themselves Protestants hold few beliefs in common with the confessors of Augsburg; and, within a far shorter period of time than that which separates us from the Reformation, the word "Opportunism" has come to designate a political attitude almost precisely the reverse of that adopted by its first great sponsor, Gambetta.

Thus, even if Professor Huxley had supplied a definition briefly and satisfactorily indicating the position of the school of thought to which he belonged, and if he had steadily held to that

definition through life, the question, "What is now meant by Agnosticism?" must sooner or later have come up for reconsideration. And I will proceed to show, from Huxley's recorded utterances on the subject, that such a definition is, unfortunately, not forthcoming.

According to the late Mr. R. H. Hutton, as quoted in the *New English Dictionary* (better known as the *Oxford Dictionary*), the following definition of "Agnostic" was suggested in his hearing by Professor Huxley "at Mr. James Knowles's house .....one evening in 1869": "One who holds that the existence of anything beyond and behind material phenomena is unknown and (so far as can be judged) unknowable, and especially that a First Cause and an unseen world are subjects of which we know nothing." It was taken, Mr. Hutton adds, from St. Paul's mention of the altar to "the Unknown God."

Hutton was not remarkable for the accuracy of his printed statements; and one might hesitate to make Huxley responsible for such slovenly phraseology as is here put into his mouth, had not the quotation been published during his lifetime, and suffered to pass uncontradicted as recording in a monumental work the exact expression of his opinion. Anyhow, the definition will not hold water. A leak is sprung by the introduction of the qualification "material" affixed to "phenomena." No one knew better than Huxley that there are non-material phenomena also—mental, spiritual, or whatever we are to call them; in short, thought, feeling, and volition. Are we, then, to conclude that an Agnostic may admit the existence

of something "beyond and behind" these? And, if so, what are his reasons for drawing a line of distinction between the two classes of phenomena? Again, limiting ourselves to material phenomena, does an Agnostic, as such, necessarily exclude the atomic theory and the undulatory theory from the domain of knowledge, or does he count the supposed atoms and ether among phenomena? As to the altar at Athens, of course anything may suggest anything else; but one cannot help noting that Huxley went a long step further than the Athenians. They gave practical evidence of their conviction that the god to whom the altar was dedicated existed, although of his attributes they were wholly ignorant. Our Agnostic, on the contrary, does not know, and holds that there is no possibility of knowing, whether a First Cause exists or not. And, what is still more remarkable, Herbert Spencer, the acknowledged chief of the Agnostic school, could not, under this definition, claim to be considered an Agnostic at all. So far from declaring the existence of anything behind material phenomena to be unknown and unknowable, Spencer proclaimed, as our supreme certainty, the existence of "an Unconditioned Reality without beginning or end," from which all phenomena are derived.[1]

While Huxley's definition excludes certain persons calling themselves Agnostics, it comes perilously near to including others who would repudiate the name. How are we to class thinkers who say with Nietzsche that the apparent world is the real world—there being no other; or with Mr.

[1] *First Principles*, p. 192.

F. H. Bradley, that the Absolute has no assets but appearances? If we identify the existent with the knowable and the knowable with phenomena, then, indeed, we neither do nor can know anything behind phenomena, simply because no such thing exists.

Turn we now from Huxley's reported conversation to the printed declarations of his later years. Writing to defend his philosophy against a number of attacks proceeding from various quarters, he says:—

> Agnosticism is not a creed, but a method, the essence of which lies in the rigorous application of a single principle.....the great principle of Descartes.....the fundamental axiom of modern science. Positively the principle may be expressed: In matters of the intellect follow your reason as far as it will take you without regard to any other consideration. And negatively: In matters of the intellect do not pretend that conclusions are certain which are not demonstrated or demonstrable.[1]

It will be seen that, logically, this definition has not a note in common with that reported by Hutton. There is here no reference to phenomena, material or otherwise, or to a First Cause, or to the unknown and unknowable. The author may well call his principle one "of great antiquity"; the wonder is that he should have gone out of his way to invent for it a new-fangled name—a name, moreover, which does not by its etymology give the slightest hint of its meaning. Huxley had quite enough Greek scholarship to be aware that the word ἄγνωστος in Greek philosophy bears the sense of "unknowable" as well as of "unknown"; and this was just what

[1] From an article on "Agnosticism" originally published in the *Nineteenth Century* for February, 1889, and reprinted in *Essays on Controverted Questions* (London, 1892), p. 362.

made the name derived from it so felicitous a designation for the metaphysical theory recently set forth in the introduction to *First Principles,* and what speedily won for it the unanimous acceptance of the educated classes in England. Assuredly it was accepted as designating—to reverse its author's claim—a creed rather than a method, the extreme application of a principle rather than the principle itself.

For that method, for that principle, proclaimed by Huxley in his later days as what Agnosticism really designated, a name already existed, or at least there was a name which, with a couple of explanations, might have been made to fit it exactly. I mean the word "Rationalism," which certainly has the disadvantage of connoting a certain hostility to theology, but a hostility by no means amounting to that complete rejection which Agnosticism has been supposed to imply. I say "disadvantage," not because I am writing as an advocate of theology—whose pretensions I am not now concerned either to uphold or to impugn—but because it seems to me that principles, from which opposite conclusions continue to be drawn with complete sincerity by thinkers of equal ability, ought not to be given names committing their supporters to either side of the controverted issues. Huxley himself seems to have felt that, in proportion as he widened the meaning of the word "Agnostic," he raised it to a new eminence above the disputed dogmas of the hour. "Agnosticism," he assures us, "has no quarrel with scientific theology."[1] What, then, becomes of his own

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 452.

famous epigram, penned only a few months before: "If Mr. Harrison, like most people, means by 'religion' theology, then in my judgment Agnosticism can be said to be a stage in its evolution only as death may be said to be the final stage in the evolution of life."[1] If the Agnostic has no quarrel with the scientific theologian, it is only in the same sense in which we say that the executioner has no quarrel with his victim.

It need hardly be observed that Huxley's rather weak attempt to back out of his earlier and far more characteristic attitude of mortal enmity to all theology, "scientific" or otherwise, remained without influence on the common use of the word originally created to express that attitude. Launched at first starting in a negative direction, it soon received a new impulse in the same sense, from a steadier, and in this instance a more powerful, hand. In truth, its great success as a party name first dates from an essay entitled "An Agnostic's Apology," contributed by Leslie Stephen to the *Fortnightly Review* in June, 1876. In that deliverance of conscience there was a note of poignant experience that riveted attention, and an accent of sincerity that commanded respect. Here was evidently one to whom, at a supreme crisis, the consolations of theology had once more been offered, and who had angrily flung them aside as not merely illusory, but as adding a new sting to the anguish of bereaved affection. For the rest, Leslie Stephen put the Agnostic case in a nutshell. There are limits to the human intelligence, and

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 366.

theology lies outside those limits. Mansel, in his Bampton Lectures on *The Limits of Religious Thought,* had adopted this position, but had used it to screen the mysteries of orthodox Christianity against Rationalistic criticism. The same principles were then taken up and pushed to their logical conclusion by Herbert Spencer, whom Stephen seems to regard, with justice, as the founder of modern English Agnosticism, and whose presentation, I may add, remains the most complete and systematic form of the doctrine. It must be observed, however, that with Spencer, as with Mansel, though not to the same extent, Agnosticism has a positive side, to which Leslie Stephen does not call attention. The object of his "apology" was not, in fact, to give an exhaustive view of the subject, but rather to retort on believers the charge of giving up the attempt to solve the riddles of existence.

To say that man's intelligence has limits is not to say that within those limits it is impotent. To declare that certain problems are insoluble is not to deny that other problems have been solved, and that many more may be attacked with good hope of success. These are truisms, but apparently they are truisms that need to be occasionally restated and enforced. The vulgar are not quick to draw distinctions; and, hearing that Agnosticism had something to do with not knowing, they took it to imply not so much ignorance of the Absolute as absolute ignorance. Richard Hutton, with his usual inaccuracy, translated it into "a sort of know-nothingism"; and Laurence Oliphant makes a very modern young man, in his novel, *Altiora Peto,*

say to the heroine: "We neither of us know anything or believe anything; in other words, we are both Agnostics." So, also, a very recent writer of high philosophical pretensions, Dr. Percy Gardner, in the opening pages of his *Exploratio Evangelica*, seems to use "Agnostic" and "Sceptic" as synonymous terms. What was said of Huxley's definition may be repeated in this connection. There is no need to coin a new word when there is an old word of the same value in general circulation. But the popular confusion may be turned to good account. From one point of view nothing throws a more vivid light on the meaning of Agnosticism than to contrast it with Scepticism. The ancient Sceptics doubted everything, and were at last driven to the pass of doubting that they doubted. This paradox helps us to understand the logical difficulty of their position. The very notion of doubt would be impossible without the correlative notion of certainty to serve as a standard of comparison. But the notion of certainty can be acquired only by the experience of knowledge. It may be said that our certainties have often turned out to be illusory; but that is only because the standard of knowledge has been raised: our very disillusionment proves that we have a standard still. Here is a law which the Agnostic, unlike the Sceptic, has recognised. He claims to possess knowledge within the limits of experience so abundant in quantity and so good in quality that it furnishes sufficient material for an exhaustive analysis, by which he succeeds, at least to his own satisfaction, in determining the nature and conditions of all knowledge — in framing a concept of knowledge in general. Briefly stated,

the result is this: The whole content of consciousness resolves itself into groups of phenomena arranged according to certain laws of resemblance, difference, co-existence, and succession. These groups and their component parts severally become associated with particular signs, generally called names; and a group is said to be known when the order of its components is accurately reproduced by the order of the signs that denote them.

Agnostics contend that something exists independently of phenomena—that is, independently of our states of consciousness—but a something that cannot be known. Their arguments may be conveniently distributed under three heads. First as regards the material world. Modern science leads us to the conception of multitudinous invisible atoms attracting and repelling one another in various ways, or, as some would prefer to state the case, of minute masses moving towards, or away from, one another. But it seems to be generally admitted that when we talk of forces and atoms, or of mass and motion, we are only using convenient fictions for the purpose of making the phenomena amenable to our methods of calculation. Even supposing force and matter, as we conceive them, to exist independently of our conceptions, we should not know what they are in themselves, nor the reason of their behaviour. We cannot get inside them, nor can our analysis extract anything from their mutual relations, but sequences and co-existences, which, for aught we can tell, might have been of an altogether different description. Still less, if possible, can we explain the existence, as a whole, of the material world. It can neither

be conceived as having been there from all eternity, nor as having had a beginning before which there was nothing, nor as having been created out of nothing by an immaterial cause. Finally, our ignorance on these points altogether precludes the question for what purpose the world exists—excludes even the assumption that it has any purpose whatever.

If material phenomena consist for us in some of the fleeting shows of consciousness, it is inconceivable, according to the Spencerian Agnostic, that they should be the mere product of our mental activity. They come and go in complete independence of our volition; they have an order which is not that of our thoughts and feelings; we are convinced that they stand for a reality which is older than our consciousness, and which will survive when we are no more.

Passing from the objective to the subjective sphere, from material to mental phenomena, the limitations to knowledge make themselves still more painfully felt. Experience shows that our only data, the processes of consciousness, are discontinuous. Never was a more unwarrantable dictum than that "The soul always thinks." *I*, at any rate, do not always think; nor am I interested in an assumed something that vicariously performs that office for me in the hours of unconsciousness, and that, to use Fichte's illustration, is no more myself than is a piece of lava in the moon. If, then, we assume an enduring substance as the supporter of thought and feeling, it must have a possible and very frequently an actual existence apart from these manifestations; that is to say, considered in its

absolute self-existence, it must be unconscious, and therefore inconceivable to us. Equally inconceivable is the materialistic theory that thought and feeling are the products of molecular changes in the nervous tissue; and, even were it conceivable, we should, by accepting it, be thrown back on the ultimate impossibility of interpreting physical phenomena in terms of absolute reality. And, as the essence of mind is unknown, so neither is any complete explanation of its processes forthcoming. Our analysis ends with empirical sequences for which no reason can be given. Equally hopeless is the attempt to account for the origin of consciousness in time. So far as the inhabitants of this planet are concerned, we know that consciousness had a beginning; but we know nothing else. That it came out of mechanical movements, or that it was created by another consciousness, or that it was uncaused, seem to be equally inconceivable alternatives. Thus, if there is a reality behind and beyond consciousness, it must be unknowable; but for the existence of such a reality we have the strongest testimony of consciousness itself.

The third argument for Agnosticism is drawn from considerations of a highly metaphysical character, counting, I think, for much less at the present day than in the middle decades of the last century. We used to be told that the Finite implied an Infinite, the Relative an Absolute, the Conditioned an Unconditioned; that we could not have a distinct consciousness of the one without a vague consciousness of the other; that, while knowledge involves the antithesis of subject and object, it also involves their synthesis in a higher

unity. Perhaps these abstractions will not look so alarming if we approach them from a less dialectical point of view. What we know we know by thinking; and to think is to condition, to limit, to bring into relation. The most universal of all relations is that of subject and object, the knower and the known. The subject-matter of knowledge is the whole content of consciousness; and this, as we have already seen, comes to be arranged under various forms which it is the business of the intellect to recognise, some states of consciousness being referred to an external world, and the remainder to our own mind. If by an effort of abstraction we think away the forms of thought, their content does not disappear. There remains an indestructible reality which we cannot conceive (for to conceive would be to condition and relationise), but of which we are vaguely conscious—without which, indeed, the developed consciousness called knowledge would be impossible. Being without relations, this pure existence may be spoken of as absolute; being without limit, it may be spoken of as infinite; being common to object and subject, it may be said to transcend their distinction. That ultimate reality, whose presence and pressure we have already felt before and behind phenomena, now floods the barriers of the outer and inner sense, penetrating and filling the phenomenal sphere itself.

This is the unknown and unknowable that Agnostics confess—at least, all Agnostics of the Spencerian persuasion; and, since Huxley devised a name that so admirably hit off their doctrine, I submit that his restriction of it to a method which

might conceivably lead to quite different results is not justified by the ordinary usages of language, or by the exigencies of scientific phraseology. Indeed, the frank admission, contained in one of his later essays, that he did "not very much care to speak of anything as 'unknowable,'"[1] although he certainly did so speak at the outset of his philosophical career, seems to show that his metaphysical attitude had undergone a change that made the word under discussion no longer the fittest to express it.

If, as is very possible, some of my readers do not find the above arguments very convincing, I must beg them to believe that I am not writing as an advocate of Agnosticism, and that its professed adherents might very well be able to put their case in a stronger manner. Those who wish for a complete and authoritative view, presented in the best possible light, will, of course, find it in the opening chapters of *First Principles*. The word "Agnostic" does not there occur; but Herbert Spencer adopted it in subsequent publications as a suitable designation for the school which he represented. My present purpose, however, is to fix attention on the results to which the reasonings of the school have led rather than on the reasonings themselves. And I now propose to consider those results in reference to the claims of theology on belief.

The group of controversial essays in which Huxley set forth his latest opinions on this question with so much vigour, but, as I have tried to show,

[1] "Agnosticism and Christianity," *op. cit.*, p. 451.

with so little precision, was called forth by the angry utterances of some English divines, who seemed to be irritated and dismayed by the general acceptance of a party name which could be applied to their opponents without giving them offence. Judging with perfect accuracy that Agnosticism implied the rejection of Christianity, and being interested in it only to that extent, they declared that Agnostics were, in plain language, infidels, and should without ceremony be branded as such. The demand showed a certain want of urbanity, and still more a want of discrimination. Even granting that the rejection of the Christian faith—or, rather, of all the somewhat discordant creeds clustered together under that appellation—is a deplorable error, it has ceased to be regarded as a crime; and therefore it should not be confounded under the same denomination with what *is* criminal —the violation of a plighted troth. But, waiving the question of good manners and the undesirability to a logical understanding of classing Agnostics with adulterers and fraudulent trustees, there is, perhaps, something to be said for the propriety of countenancing the distinctions set up by Freethinkers among themselves. If all Agnostics are "infidels," all "infidels" are not Agnostics; and some would abjure communion with that particular sect as heartily as any Churchman, nor would they meet with very respectful treatment from its devotees. Carlyle and Francis Newman, Emerson and Theodore Parker, perhaps even James Martineau, certainly Clifford, were all, to the Anglican mind, "infidels"; yet not one of them was an Agnostic. Hegel, who was never

weary of denouncing the current acquiescence in ignorance of things in themselves, used to pass, I think with reason, as a formidable enemy of Christianity; and the English neo-Hegelians may be the next foe with whom orthodoxy will have to reckon. There is, I know, a good deal of coquetry going on just now between the dialectic philosophy and the higher Catholicism;[1] but something of the same sort happened at Berlin before the advent of Strauss and Feuerbach.

As a philosophical system Agnosticism has much that is unobjectionable, or even acceptable, to the religious believer. Cardinal Newman, in defending the reasonableness of transubstantiation, urged that we do not know what matter is in itself; and doubtless he would have avowed the same ignorance about the essence of mind. Of course, no Christian, and, indeed, no theist, will admit that the origin of the world or of our own consciousness is unknown; but if he is candid he will admit that to adduce the will of a divine Creator as a sufficient cause for either is merely to push the difficulty a step further back. That a self-conscious intelligence, with power to make a world out of nothing, should have existed from all eternity is not in itself a proposition of axiomatic evidence, nor intrinsically more conceivable than its contradictory; and nothing that is not a self-evident axiom can be taken as ultimate in philosophy. Without going into the question of origins, the incomprehensibility of God has long been a theological commonplace. Like Huxley, the religious

[1] Written in 1900.

believer may "not much care to talk about the 'Unknowable'" (with or without a capital); but he would hardly refuse to admit that the divine nature, being infinite, can never be fully understood by a finite intelligence. He may appeal to revelation, either the revelation of his own conscience or the revelation given by inspired writers, as affording some certain knowledge of God's will; but, so far, his knowledge of divine things amounts to no more than the knowledge of nature that an Agnostic professes to derive from the study of material and mental phenomena. This also may, without much straining, be called a revelation; and the truth of each revelation is relative, to the extent of being conditioned by the capacity of its recipient. A Christian may plead that to have the same assurance of God's existence that a Spencerian Agnostic has of the existence of an objective world, or of his fellow-men, or, if it comes to that, of his own existence, is a sufficiently solid basis for his Theistic faith. He may, if he chooses, draw out a further parallel between the workings of the Power manifested to us through all existence[1] and the workings of God as manifested in the scheme of redemption.

Agnosticism and Christianity do not, then, as some seem to suppose, form a sharply contrasted and mutually exclusive couple; still less are they alternatives exhausting the possibilities of serious belief. An Agnostic may become convinced by reading Hegel that "the universe is penetrable by thought," and yet have moved to a greater distance from faith in a personal God; and a Christian may

[1] *First Principles*, p. 112.

let fall every article in his creed but that one, holding it as a truth given by experience and induction. The one will have ceased to be an Agnostic, and the other will have ceased to be a Christian; but their positions will not have been exchanged. Indeed, this whole system of alternatives is a fiction invented by brow-beating controversialists, and accepted by a public too lazy or too impatient for the exercise of that private judgment which it professes to prize so dearly.

The truth is that the Agnostic rejects Christianity on grounds quite distinct from the metaphysical considerations by which he has become convinced that things in themselves cannot be known. A course of logical and ethical analysis has led him to think that the doctrines held in common by all the Churches are inconsistent with themselves and with the morality that they profess to teach. A course of historical criticism has led him to think that miracles do not happen; that there never was a revelation; that the advent of Christianity can be explained, like any other phenomenon in the evolution of religion, by natural causes. The whole process is well exhibited in that masterpiece of mental autobiography, Francis Newman's *Phases of Faith*—a work, in my opinion, far superior to his brother's more celebrated *Apologia*.

But the modern Agnostic does not find rest, where the younger Newman found it, in the creed of ethical Theism. Starting in early youth from a much more advanced position, and enjoying much greater liberty of thought than was possible in the first half of the last century, he attacks the supreme questions of theology with a more open and a more

active mind. What is of still greater importance, he finds himself supplied, by the advance of positive knowledge, with a new set of ideas—above all, with the idea of evolution.

Much has been written about the relations between evolution and theology, and the subject is still far from being exhausted. Only a few leading points can be touched on here. The Darwinian theory, so far as it went, was adverse to natural Theism because it tended to substitute mechanical for teleological causation. In more familiar language, it did away with the argument from design in a field where that argument had hitherto reigned supreme. At one stroke a single volume made large libraries obsolete. Even if it could be shown that natural selection had not the efficacy attributed to it by Darwin, and still more by Weismann, the old methods of reasoning would not recover from the shock they received when it was first promulgated ; for here was a totally new explanation of the mechanism by which organisms are adapted to their environment, and none could tell how many more such explanations the science of the future holds in reserve, "one sure if another fails." Hence the rule, now generally admitted, that appeals to supernatural intervention do not lie in the region of physical phenomena.

Evolution is not, however, limited to the region of physical phenomena. Under the influence of the new doctrine, mental phenomena also—feeling, volition, and reason—came to be interpreted as part of the vast mechanism by which organisms are adapted to their environment, and as having, like every other part, grown up gradually in response

to the demands of life. How, then, could such obviously relative qualities be legitimately ascribed to the absolute cause or substance of things? Our moral nature in particular, which had long been claimed by religious teachers as a peculiar revelation of the transcendent realities, became an adaptation like any other—a social instinct, a racial heritage, secured by the survival of the fittest. The spiritual experiences confidently appealed to by believers could be explained away by the evolutionist as survivals of the hallucinated states known to occur with far more intensity among primitive men.

Behind the dynamic law of evolution our Middle Victorian inquirer found another and a greater law, more luminous in its evidence, more sweeping in its applicability, more inflexible in the severity of its control—the static law of conservation, the principle that the quantity of energy in the universe remains unaltered and unalterable, without increase or diminution, through all time. This principle enabled him to arrive by a more summary process at the results already detailed. Miracles, which historical criticism had shown to be fictitious, were fictitious because they were impossible—because their performance would involve a creation or a destruction of energy.[1] And the same principle might be applied to the whole range of religious experiences still maintained by natural Theism, including the efficacy of prayer and the very

[1] In view of the ignorance still prevalent on this subject, I must mention that to give energy a new direction, not determined by pre-existing energy, involves either the creation or the destruction of energy.

existence of human free-will. Theologians might call this reasoning in a circle. They might say that to assume that the law of conservation held without exception was to assume the very point at issue, whether supernatural intervention was possible or not. Herbert Spencer and his disciples would reply that the conservation of energy, or, as they preferred to call it, the persistence of force, was, like the axioms of geometry, a truth known *à priori*, and verified by the inconceivableness of its contradictory. Thinkers of a more moderate school would be content to argue that a principle found to prevail over the whole field of phenomena accessible to exact observation and experiment showed the highest probability of being true without exception.

Another point remains to be noticed as illustrating the latent hostility between Theism and the law of conservation. I refer to what is known as the order of nature and its implications. The subject was a favourite theme with the Rev. Professor Baden Powell, famous for his epoch-making contribution to *Essays and Reviews*, and, what now seems forgotten, a fervent evolutionist before Darwin. This very liberal divine, while frankly abandoning miracles, insisted on the order of nature, the unbroken supremacy of law, as the one all-sufficient proof that the world was ruled by a personal God. But, according to Herbert Spencer, order and law simply mean that the quantity of matter existing always remains the same, that its properties are constant, and that the variations in the movements of its particles are mutually compensatory—all consequences of the conservation

of energy.[1] What we call the order of nature is merely another expression for that ultimate self-identity of the universe which reason is not needed to explain, for it first makes reasoning possible to us.

It will be observed that, so far, the case has been conducted on behalf of our supposed free inquirer, without any reference to Agnostic principles. His appeal has not been to the new nescience, but to the new science. A point has been now reached where the intervention of Agnosticism can be explained. Left alone on what Carlyle calls the shoreless fountain-ocean of force, to what stars shall we turn for guidance? The position was not new. The philosophers who met round Baron D'Holbach's dinner-table, the English Benthamites, the German materialists, had reached very similar conclusions, and had called them "Atheism." The disciples of Nietzsche would call them so still. With a little ingenuity they could equally well be fitted into the creed of Pantheism more or less openly professed by Goethe and Herder at Weimar, by Schelling and Hegel at Jena, by Coleridge and Wordsworth at Alfoxden. But it so happened that England, in 1860, was under the dominion of the Kantian criticism; not that many students read Kant for themselves, but the chief results of his philosophy had been presented in what, as compared with the original, might be called a popular form by Hamilton and Mansel. Now, it is interesting to note that these two writers, both strong supporters of the received opinions, were particularly earnest opponents of German Pantheism,

[1] This argument was pressed against Baden Powell by G. J. Romanes in his non-theistic days.

at that time a great bugbear to the orthodox. Hamilton, for all his boasted learning, was not very deeply read in German philosophy, and his acquaintance with Schelling and Hegel, the latter especially, seems to have been superficial; his attack is directed chiefly against a flashy combination of their theories, put together, with more rhetorical skill than sincerity, by the Parisian sophist, Victor Cousin. Mansel, on the other hand, knew a good deal about Hegel, and seems to have anticipated with singular prescience the future ascendancy of Hegelianism at Oxford, although he probably did not foresee that it would be converted by some professors into a bulwark of Anglican theology. To him Hegel was the master of Strauss and Baur, the author of a method for dissipating dogma into mist; and he turned for salvation, as Hamilton had already turned, to Kant, with whose help Atheism also could be refuted.

To some persons Pantheism and Atheism are indistinguishable; to others they stand for the widest possible contrasts of belief; but it will be generally admitted that on one important point they are agreed. Both alike assume that things in themselves can be known. The philosophy of Atheism is, as a rule, materialistic or monadistic. Mass and motion are intelligible conceptions apart from our consciousness, and from mass and motion all phenomena are derived. The absolute, in Dühring's phrase, is under our feet. In the more modern refinements of the system a certain amount of sensibility is supposed to accompany each material particle or centre of force; and consciousness is explained as resulting from the joint

action of innumerable monads; or, by a still nearer approach to idealism, the elementary sensibilities are conceived as the only true realities, what we call matter being a mere objectivation of feeling. In any case, a plurality of substances is the primary fact beyond which we need not go.

Pantheism is much less easy to define; and perhaps no definition can be framed wide enough to embrace the various forms under which it has been professed throughout history and all over the world. For our present purpose only the most recent aspects need be taken into account; and of these it is enough to say that, starting from a supreme animating principle, the centre and soul of things, they work down to the particular modes of existence, explaining the parts by the whole rather than, as in the materialistic method, the whole by the parts. Those who wish to avoid what they consider confusing theological associations may call the result spiritualistic monism. For us the important thing to note is the attempt here also to render existence into intelligible terms, to make thought conterminous with things.

Agnosticism regards both attempts, the pluralistic and the monistic, as alike chimerical. It applies the Kantian or Hamiltonian criticism to their logic, and finds it wanting. Not from any lack of moral courage, but from sheer intellectual honesty, does the Agnostic refuse to call himself an Atheist or a Pantheist. In truth, it is against Atheism and Pantheism, rather than against Theism, that the point of his philosophy is turned. As has been already observed, he may have much in common with the Theist, who generally shares his contempt

for dogmatic metaphysics. Of course, he has no mercy on *à priori* attempts to "construct" a personal God; but of these we hear less and less every day. It is true that the *à posteriori* or inductive argument, which leads up from the contemplation of nature to the recognition of divine intelligence and will before and beyond nature, fails to convince him; but his objections to it are based, as I have said, on scientific grounds in the widest sense of the word "scientific," using it so as to include psychology and historical criticism. At the same time, the Spencerian Agnostic admits, or rather contends, that Theism, and, indeed, all forms of ontology, whether monistic or pluralistic, spiritualistic or materialistic, contain a certain measure of truth. He agrees with them in admitting that phenomena are not everything—that they are the index to an absolute reality; but Kant has taught him that this reality is beyond the reach of our knowledge.

If the foregoing analysis is correct, the late Bishop Fraser was not justified in saying that "the Agnostic neither denied nor affirmed God," but "simply put him on one side." If the Bishop meant by "God" what most of his co-religionists mean, then the Agnostic certainly denies the existence of such a being, if only because, like Darwin, he "does not believe that there ever was a revelation"; and the Christian God is essentially self-revealing. If by "God" is meant a Power whence all things proceed, then the Agnostic no more puts him on one side than Spinoza did. Of course, it was open to Bishop Fraser to contend that Spinozism amounts to a denial of God; and, if words are to

retain their ordinary meanings, I am by no means sure that he would not have been right; but such a denial differs widely from the lazily contemptuous attitude implied by the Bishop's phrase.

After all, the final issue will centre in the question of personality. Evidently the Agnostic, refusing to predicate anything of the absolute reality, cannot positively say that it is a person; but can he positively say that it is not a person? It seems to me that he is logically bound to go that far; for the notion of personality seems to involve the notion of a subject and object, related to and conditioning one another, which excludes the notion of an absolute. Accordingly, the chiefs of the Agnostic school, if I am rightly informed, take refuge in the supposition that there may be something infinitely higher than personality, and free from its limitations. But I must confess that to me at least such an hypothesis conveys no meaning whatever. Inconceivable is not the word for it. The category of quantity is out of relation to personality. We may talk about being "intensely self-conscious" or the reverse; but that is said only in reference to our concrete individuality as apparent to others. Pure self-consciousness admits of no degrees. When Jean Paul, at five years old, thought to himself "*Ich bin ein Ich,*" he had won that to the perfection of whose reality no experience or imagination or philosophy could add any more than the centre of a circle can be modified by enlarging its circumference. My present business, however, is not criticism, but exposition; and to that I return.

To some minds what a philosopher thinks about

human immortality marks his attitude towards religion even more decisively than what he thinks about the existence and nature of God. To others, on the contrary, it is a mere matter of curiosity, possessing little or no religious value. At any rate, religious history and the course of recent speculation have made it abundantly clear that there is no necessary association between the belief in a personal God and the belief in a future life. An eminent religious genius, Leo Tolstoy, holds the latter doctrine to be incompatible with true Christianity. A very independent thinker, the late Edmund Gurney, seems to have rejected God while keeping immortality; and there are probably many who more or less openly hold the same opinion. Theoretically at least there seems no reason why a similar latitude should not prevail among Agnostics. I should say that, in practice, nearly all who call themselves by that name hold that consciousness becomes extinct with the destruction of what our ordinary experience shows to be its physiological conditions; but they hold this conviction as Rationalists rather than as Agnostics. An Agnostic will no doubt subject the alleged phenomena of spiritualism to a more severe scrutiny than the ordinary religious believer, and, even if he accepts them as genuine, will be more cautious about making them the basis for wide inferences; but, even if he accepts them for what they profess to be, they must always remain *phenomena*—that is, products of a reality the absolute nature of which is unknown and unknowable. However dazzling the prospects of futurity opened out to him may be, there is one assurance from which he remains

debarred. He cannot say, like a confident young friend of mine, "I *know* that the soul is immortal." Not only can he not say it in this life, but in no circumstances conceivable to us could he say it. Supposing his individual consciousness to be prolonged for any length of time, the fatal antithesis of subject and object would still remain, shutting him out from a real knowledge of things in themselves and of the possibilities of a catastrophe that infinite time may contain.

I have said that the quarrel of the Agnostic is rather with the Pantheist and the dogmatic Atheist than with the Christian Theist, whose belief he rejects on grounds common to all Rationalists. Still, one quite understands the peculiar animosity with which Agnosticism is regarded by orthodox champions, for it occupies a very much stronger, because less assailable, position than that held by their ancient opponents. Theological controversialists like to carry the war into the enemy's country, to lay him prostrate with a *tu quoque,* or to explode his magazines with a well-directed sneer. The Atheist is asked whether he can compose an epic poem by shaking up a quantity of type in a box. The Pantheist is taunted with believing that the table is God, or that he himself is God. The Agnostic offers no such handle for attack. He has, to use Huxley's expression, "made a desert of the unknowable," so that it will not support an invading army. Asked what explanation, then, *he* gives of the origin of things, he calmly replies that he has none—that the problem is insoluble. "What! have you not a theory of the universe?" said a clerical friend in mild surprise to Professor

Tyndall. "I have not even a theory of magnetism," was the answer of the great physicist. It must add to the discomfiture of polemical divines if they bear in mind that the trick was taught by one of themselves. It is almost pathetic to re-read those wonderful Bampton Lectures of Dean Mansel, masterly, brilliant, and overwhelming, and then to remember how, only two years after their delivery, his positions were outflanked by Herbert Spencer, his batteries seized, and his artillery turned with destructive effect on the retreating ranks of orthodoxy.

The Agnostic, however, gives away this immunity from attack when, with Spencer, he exchanges a purely critical for a constructive attitude. It then appears that, in endeavouring at once to reconcile and to supersede the various forms of theology, he has borrowed a principle from each, with the result of putting together a somewhat heterogeneous and unstable edifice. The idea of a necessary antithesis between appearance and reality, of a hidden power which at once produces phenomena and radically differs from them, comes from natural Theism, and repeats the dualism that has always been its reproach in the eyes of philosophy, which, in Emerson's phrase, is essentially centripetal; while the manner in which phenomena are spoken of as manifesting the power behind them sounds like a reminiscence of Christian revelation. When the ultimate reality figures as an infinite and absolute, or, what comes to the same thing, a non-relative existence, a substance for ever extricating itself even in our consciousness from the conditions and limitations of thought, the debt is still more obvious to Pantheism,

to the indestructible tradition of Parmenides and Spinoza. When the unknowable, of which assuredly neither unity nor plurality should be predicated, is habitually spoken of as one, Theism and Pantheism have contributed in equal proportions to that extreme definiteness of statement. Finally, when in the theory of evolution the teleological method is altogether superseded by mechanical causation, we have a procedure running parallel to the atheistic materialism from which Agnostics are most sincerely anxious to dissociate their cause.[1]

There is, then, some truth in the dry remark of a subtle critic, the late Father Dalgairns, that it seems we know a good deal about the unknowable. At any rate, what may be called the positive and dogmatic Agnosticism of *First Principles* seems to contain germs of decomposition inherited from parent systems which must eventually lead to its dissolution. But the philosophy of knowledge (or ignorance) represented by Spencer is older than his system, and will survive it. He would himself have been the first to admit that differentiation must go on; and an attempt to indicate roughly the divergent lines along which Agnostic speculation will move in the immediate future may not be premature.

First of all, we may expect that the conceptual proofs of an infinite and absolute existence beyond consciousness will be given back to the exclusive

[1] In the profoundly interesting chapter on "The Dynamic Element in Life," added to the last edition of his *Principles of Biology*, Spencer himself insists on the insufficiency of mechanical causation as applied to the explanation of vital phenomena; and some will probably interpret this as a concession to teleology. *Cf.* vol. i., pp. 573–574, of the same edition.

keeping of the Pantheism whence they were derived. Agnostics will content themselves with insisting that the phenomena of consciousness must be produced by causes beyond consciousness, and therefore unknowable; but they will drop the somewhat mystical phrase "the Unknowable," if only to avoid the appearance of assuming, what seems highly improbable, that the endless varieties of sensible existence proceed from a single self-identical Power; and they will abandon the chimerical idea that the recognition of such indefinite and indefinable forces can be made the basis of a final religion, or has anything to do with religion at all, seeing that religion is nothing if not the revelation of a supersensual world. Such a course would involve no new departure; it would be merely a return to the principles of Auguste Comte, of Mill's *Logic*, and of Lewes's *History of Philosophy*.

Others, again, may plausibly maintain that to postulate causes of phenomena which certainly exist, and as certainly cannot be known, is a somewhat self-contradictory proceeding, savouring of the old metaphysics, and that a true Agnostic will decline to commit himself one way or the other. He will observe that our notion of causation, whether derived from the sense of muscular effort or from the observation of invariable sequences among phenomena, is essentially subjective, and cannot legitimately receive a transcendental application. When asked how phenomena are to be explained without assuming an external cause, he will answer: "I don't know. Perhaps phenomena as a whole are uncaused, or self-caused, or caused

by something in the future. If I am talking nonsense, it is your fault in asking nonsensical questions about things to which our categories do not apply. Keep your catechism for the Sunday school."

Finally, there will be, or rather there are even now, a few patient and temperate inquirers who, convinced of their own ignorance, convinced also that in no school, past or present, is the enlightenment they desiderate to be found, will yet refuse to restrict the future development of thought. In their opinion, the possibilities of knowledge are themselves among the things that cannot now be known. With Taine, they see the limits of their own mind, but not the limits of the human mind. With Huxley, they do "not much care to speak about anything as 'unknowable.'" Yet none better deserve the name of "Agnostics," if Agnosticism implies the irrevocable condemnation of what has been proved false, coupled with the resolute refusal to set up a still more fragile image in its place. Theirs is not the facile philosophy which, shamed out of its old via-mediaism, instead of saying that truth lies between the two extremes, pronounces with a still more oracular air the dictum that contradictories are equally true. They hold that to be always turning back is the worst possible way to reach the goal, and that rubbish-heaps are the weakest possible foundations for a new building.

I have no great faith in abstract definitions. Experience shows that the best of them are open to exception, and that they have hampered pure speculation with the difficulties of legal draughtsmanship, without the excuse of those practical necessities by which lawyers are hemmed in. But,

for the comfort and relief of those persons who read only the beginning and end of an essay, I conclude with a summary, as short and as exact as I can make it, of the results to which the foregoing exposition has led.

Agnosticism is the philosophy of those who hold that knowledge is acquired only by reasoning on the facts of experience; that among these facts supernatural events have no place; that facts, if any, lying beyond experience are inconceivable; and that no theory, theological or otherwise, professing to give an account of such facts has any legitimate claim on our belief.

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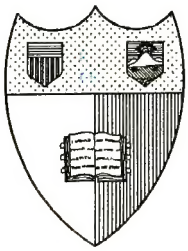

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MODERN ENGLAND

The England around us becomes our own England, an England whose chief forces are industry and science, the love of popular freedom and of law, an England which presses steadily forward to a larger social justice and equality, and which tends more and more to bring every custom and tradition, religious, intellectual, and political, to the test of pure reason.

—JOHN RICHARD GREEN.

MODERN ENGLAND

A RECORD OF OPINION AND ACTION FROM THE TIME OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION TO THE PRESENT DAY

BY

ALFRED WILLIAM BENN

AUTHOR OF "THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH RATIONALISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY"

IN TWO VOLUMES

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TO

BERNHARD BERENSON

PREFACE

THE scope and limits of the present work are to some extent indicated by its second title. A record of opinion and action, as distinguished from a record of events, deals especially with those elements of history which are determined by mental causes, by human feelings, human reason, and human will, rather than by those unconscious agencies which the great historians of antiquity were wont to group together under the names of fortune or fate. In pursuance of this method I have omitted masses of detail which bulk very largely in the pages of most English Histories, such as the particulars of battles and sieges, incidents in the lives of great personages possessing merely biographical interest, Court pageants, and so forth. On the other hand, this economy of space has enabled me to include some intellectual events that other historians have altogether omitted, and to give a much greater relative prominence to those general tendencies by which social changes are ultimately determined. In particular, I have devoted special attention to that widespread disintegration of theological beliefs which Nietzsche has called the greatest event of modern history, bringing into view on the one side its antecedents in the philosophy, science, and scholarship of the age, and on the other side its reaction on literature and politics.

This task has involved the reproduction in a summary form of much that has already appeared in my *History of English Rationalism;* but a repeated survey of the field has enabled me to include a few details not mentioned in the larger work.

On matters not connected with the Rationalistic movement I have sometimes found myself obliged to go somewhat more into detail than the general scope of this History seemed to demand, because the ground was pre-occupied by views that in my opinion are either false or incomplete. For instance, the praise for efficiency so often bestowed on our old oligarchical government appears to me undeserved. The credit for philanthropic legislation so freely given by modern Tories to the Tory party at the expense of Whigs and Radicals is, so far as I can make out, totally unjustified. The services rendered to good government by the philosophic Radicals have been strangely overlooked, even by their special historians, M. Elie Halévy and the late Sir Leslie Stephen. I feel extreme diffidence in opposing, on his own ground, so high an authority as Professor Albert Dicey. But I cannot help thinking that in his important work on *Law and Opinion* he has enormously exaggerated the part given to individualism and *laissez-faire* in the philosophy of Bentham and his school. It seems to me that our modern socialistic legislation was in part anticipated by the old Utilitarians, in part has been directly developed out of their principles.

With regard to English foreign policy, I do not think George Canning has yet received anything like his due meed of recognition as a "hero of the nations." And

the same observation applies with even greater force to Canning's true successor, Palmerston. The serious errors that mark Palmerston's closing years have somewhat clouded his reputation. But they were errors inspired by the same noble love of justice and freedom which, together with a patriotism more antique than modern, was the moving principle of his whole political career. As a part of this policy he fought the Crimean War, which, if I am not mistaken, was no such ghastly blunder as is now commonly believed, but a necessary step in the deliverance of Europe from the old despotisms and its reconstitution on the lines of national independence. I hold that Kinglake, genuinely Liberal as in many ways he was, has obscured the true interpretation of the war waged by England and France against Russia by representing it in the light of a mere dynastic intrigue of Louis Napoleon's for obliterating the memory of the *Coup d'État*. My view is that France was drawn into the war by England, acting under Palmerston's guidance; but that England's motives were not self-interested, the object of her people being to avenge the wrongs of Hungary and to deliver Europe from the despotism that had been weighing on it for forty years. And the profound mistake of Disraeli, when he fancied himself the inheritor of Palmerston's policy, was not to see this—not to see that the English people are always on the side of freedom, and that freedom in 1876 was not represented by Turkey, but by Russia.

To all appearances, it has not been reserved for the twentieth century to discard the enthusiasms of its predecessor; and any English statesman who imagines

that the idea of freedom has been played out will sooner or later—and sooner rather than later—discover to his cost what potentialities of energy that idea still contains.

My best thanks are due to Mr. G. M. Trevelyan, who has kindly read through this work in MS., and suggested some important corrections; to my wife, who has given me invaluable assistance in revising the proof-sheets; and to the press-reader of Messrs. Watts and Co., whose criticisms have enabled me to rectify some inaccuracies of statement and style.

A. W. B.

January 19th, 1908.

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Chapter I.

ORGANISED ANARCHY

Forty years before the French Revolution began the greatest of French political philosophers, Montesquieu, declared that liberty was the organic principle of the English Constitution, the supreme end for whose attainment every part of its complicated mechanism had been devised. And there can be no doubt that, next to the republics of classical antiquity—if not, indeed, before them—England continued to be the ideal by which Montesquieu's saner countrymen were guided in their endeavour to substitute a more rational form of government for the decrepit despotism of their Bourbon kings.

This admiration, although excessive, rested on a solid basis of fact. At the opening of the revolutionary era England had for a century possessed far more political liberty than was enjoyed by any other great European State. Except among her own emancipated children, the newly-constituted United States of North America, no parallel to it could be found. It must not, of course, be forgotten that the term "political liberty" bears two independent senses. It stands for the absence of vexatious trammels on individual action. But it stands also for self-government, for the participation of the people in the passing and the administration of their laws, in the choice of their rulers, in shaping the

general policy of the State. Now, in both senses of the word England had much less liberty than she afterwards obtained; but the amount realised was still considerable. So far as the higher and middle classes were concerned, people could generally go about without let or hindrance, and, within the limits of mutual respect, could say or do what they liked; while the country was governed by public opinion to an extent elsewhere unknown. The voice of the educated classes and the wishes of the great interests—so far as they had become articulate—which divided English society among them found a tolerably efficacious expression in representative institutions which, however defective from a modern point of view, were not ill adapted to the wants of the time, in trial by jury, in public meetings, in pamphlet literature, and in the newspaper Press.

Political observers thought it much to preserve without extending what, in their opinion, had been so completely won. The spirit of English liberty during the latter part of the eighteenth century took the form of jealous opposition to all encroachments, real or supposed, on the part of what was called the power of the Crown. The tyranny of the Stuarts and, it must be added, of Cromwell had left bitter memories behind, not always manifested in the most reasonable ways.

Under the first two Georges there could be little to fear from the personal ambition of the king. Those sovereigns were entirely in the hands of the great Whig families to whom they owed their throne, and who could alone maintain them on it against the steady hostility of the country gentlemen

and the occasional ill-will of the masses, always ready to resent the intrusion of a foreigner.

Still the royal authority, though not directly in evidence, continued to exist, and made itself felt in more than one way. It was responsible, largely through the silent influence of Queen Caroline, for Sir Robert Walpole's long tenure of office, and, so far, must be reckoned as a mainly beneficent force. On the other hand, royalty has to be debited with abuses recalling the bad days of the Stuarts. The Court still set an example of profligacy and extravagance. The national wealth was squandered on unworthy favourites. The country was entangled in foreign wars with which it had no concern, through the dynastic interests of the reigning family; and incompetent princes received high military commands, with disastrous results to our arms.

With the accession of George III. the king's personal power both in principle and practice returned to vigorous life. Various causes simultaneously worked to the same effect. Bolingbroke, the ablest and most brilliant political writer of his age, had for many years been preaching the gospel of the Patriot King, of a ruler who, raised by his position above the strife of factions, should devote himself entirely to the good of the country; he had won over the intellect of England to this new form of Toryism; and his principles, so far as they made for absolutism, were highly acceptable to the circle in which the heir to the throne had been brought up. George III.'s mother, the Princess of Wales, had imported the same tradition of absolutism from Germany, and had often told her son to be a king.

Any lingering prejudices against the foreign dynasty were dispelled by the young sovereign's public declaration that, "born and bred an Englishman, he gloried in the name of Briton"—a phrase peculiarly calculated to secure the enthusiastic loyalty of his northern subjects. Jacobite gentlemen crowded to his Court, and were received with marked favour. Their new master proved an excellent substitute for the once chivalrous and fascinating Charles Edward, who by this time had degenerated into a brutal drunkard.

The new reign, in fact, amounted to a second Stuart restoration, including guarantees for Protestantism—which, by the way, Charles Edward would also have given—and it soon led to peace with France, the old ally of the Stuarts, the great War Minister, Pitt, being replaced at the head of affairs by a royal favourite, Lord Bute. Peace, though expedient, proved unpopular; and this first triumph over public opinion was followed by a prolonged conflict, in which the King suffered many humiliations. Not until ten years later did he find a Minister to his mind in Lord North. Personal government then had a free hand; but the experiment did not succeed as Bolingbroke had expected. Under the management of George III. a series of disastrous defeats led up to the permanent separation of the chief North American colonies from the mother-country, and to the temporary recognition of an independent Parliament in Dublin. A hostile vote of the House of Commons compelled the King to part with the subservient instrument of his designs, to accept Ministers whom he hated, and to sue for peace to the Powers whom

the elder Pitt had left prostrate at England's feet. As if to put the seal on his discomfiture, the new Administration passed a Bill involving a considerable reduction in the offices and pensions by which the unconstitutional influence of the Crown seemed to have been chiefly maintained.

Nevertheless, in the very year that saw the signature of an ignominious peace with France and her allies, George felt himself strong enough to dismiss a Ministry forced on him by the House of Commons, to bestow office on the younger Pitt, then only twenty-four years old, and to maintain him in that position against a series of hostile Parliamentary votes. What was more, the General Election of 1784 confirmed the King's choice by such an overwhelming majority of the constituencies that his opponents found themselves reduced to political impotence for twenty years to come.

The ostensible reasons for this momentous decision were the details of a Bill for the better government of India, tending, as was alleged, to reserve an enormous amount of patronage for the Whig leaders; and the scandal caused by an unprincipled coalition between Fox, the great Whig orator, and North, the Minister whose American policy he had long denounced in terms of unmeasured vituperation. But it was only reasonable that Indian patronage should be kept out of the hands which had dispensed English patronage with such disastrous effects; and that Fox should ally himself with North seems hardly, if at all, more immoral than that Chatham's son should make himself the instrument of one by whom Chatham's policy of conciliation had been rejected

and Chatham's imperial work undone. In truth, the popular feeling had deeper sources than any interests of the hour. It sprang from a genuine royalism, which in all obscure or doubtful issues inevitably went for the King and against those whom he was pleased to call his enemies.

Two more significant facts may be quoted in attestation of the personal authority exercised by the English monarch at the time of the French Revolution. One is furnished by the American Constitution as finally determined in 1789. The legislators who drew up that instrument evidently designed it as an adaptation of English institutions to the requirements of a new and more democratic society. Now, not only did they place a monarch, under the name of President, at the head of their Federation, but they gave that monarch, during his four years' tenure of office, powers of controlling the Executive and interfering with the Legislature such as George III. rather pretended to than actually possessed.

The other fact is connected with the celebrated Regency debates of 1788. In that year the King was overtaken by a fit of insanity, temporarily incapacitating him for the discharge of his duties, which, had it continued, would have necessitated the appointment of a Regent. The question came before Parliament, and some nice Constitutional questions were raised as to whether the Regency devolved by right of birth on the Heir Apparent or should be conferred on him by special legislation; and on the second alternative what restrictions, if any, should limit his exercise of the royal authority. From first to last the points at issue were debated

on purely party lines, and it was understood throughout that the whole interest of the conflict depended on the undoubted assumption that the Prince of Wales, when invested with his father's authority, would dismiss his father's Ministers, replacing them by the heads of the Whig Opposition. The Prince was known as a drunken and faithless libertine; but it seemed to be agreed on all hands that the majority of the House would transfer their allegiance from Pitt to Fox at his bidding; or that, in the event of a General Election, the constituencies would ratify the policy of the Regent as obediently as they had ratified the directly opposite policy of the King four years previously. In point of fact, a dissolution would have been unnecessary. For we know, on good authority, that in the House of Commons, as then constituted, the party of the Crown numbered 185, Fox's party 138, and Pitt's personal following only 52.[1]

Thus the King was far from being a Venetian Doge. With almost any character or capacity he was the most powerful individual in the country. With a first-rate intellect he would have been an all-powerful and irremovable Prime Minister. Nevertheless, both then and long afterwards the English Constitution might with some reason have been described as an oligarchy. The sovereign both possessed and exercised the right to choose his Ministers, but in practice he had to choose them from among the great governing families and their nominees, and it was by the character of these men as a class that the character of the Government was determined in the long run.

[1] Lord Rosebery's *Pitt*, p. 71.

Much has been written in praise of what is called the English aristocracy; that is, presumably, the titled possessors of hereditary territorial wealth; and sometimes even in foreign countries it is credited with the possession not only of large estates, but also of extraordinary virtues, and more particularly virtues of a political order. Yet, as compared with the hereditary governing classes of ancient Greece and Rome, or even of modern France and Germany, our nobles do not show to advantage as regards intellectual eminence. Up to the period we are now considering they had contributed no name of the first order to English literature, unless Henry St. John is to be counted as an exception. Their services to physical science and erudition do not exceed the limits of respectable amateurship. Two names, Peterborough and Howe, represent their achievements as commanders by land and sea. In the field of statesmanship, where most might have been expected, their sterility is most remarkable. The true makers of England's greatness and vigour—Thomas Cromwell, Cranmer, Burghley, Walsingham, Pym, Oliver Cromwell, Somers, Marlborough, Sir Robert Walpole, Chatham, Clive, Warren Hastings, Burke, Canning, Peel, Cobden, and Gladstone—all sprang from the gentry or the middle classes. On the other hand, our notorious incompetency in negotiating advantageous treaties of peace, although perhaps no misfortune as regards the more solid interests of the country, must be counted to the discredit of a diplomatic service which is peculiarly aristocratic in its composition.

A notion has been sedulously propagated by

modern Tory writers that the Whigs were an eminently oligarchical party, and that men of ability but without aristocratic connections were more systematically excluded from high office by them than by the Tories. But this view is hardly borne out by the facts. High social position was as largely represented in the Cabinets of Lord North and of Pitt as in the Cabinets of their predecessors, if not more largely. Edmund Burke is the standing example of Whig exclusiveness, the truth being that his violent temper would have made him impossible in any Cabinet. After the French Revolution a few outsiders of exceptional talent or ability to please were admitted to high office by the Tory party. This, however, may be explained by its being the party in power—a circumstance which would naturally attract ambitious young men into its ranks, where also the general average of stupidity would make their assistance more desirable. In the eighteenth century what really distinguished the Whigs from the Tories was not their oligarchical tendencies, but their steady opposition to the personal government of the King, to his interference with the choice of Ministers and with the conduct of affairs. For the rest, Toryism appealed more to the landed interest, Whiggism more to the commercial and industrial interests of the country. And in the conflict with America the landowners supported the king in his policy of coercion, while the business classes were for yielding to the demands of the Colonies.

At the same time, it would be a serious mistake to identify the Whigs of those times with what are

now called Liberal principles, with the idea of perpetual progress in speculation and practice, with democratic politics, or with reason as opposed to tradition; still less were the Tories in any sense a party of reaction or conservation, or in any pre-eminent sense a party of order. The Liberal party of our own day is indeed connected by an unbroken chain of development with the Revolution Whigs; while their opponents, by reviving the name of Tory, seem to claim a still more direct filiation from the Jacobites and the King's friends. But this sort of historical continuity does not necessarily involve a continuity of principles. With parties as with all other organisations, the first law of existence is self-preservation, and in obedience to it they may transform themselves almost out of recognition.

It is a familiar commonplace that to be in office tends to foster one set of opinions, while to be in opposition tends to foster the contrary opinions. Under the first Hanoverian Kings the Tories were excluded from power, and this circumstance gave them an individuality, a love of liberty, one may almost say an ideality, which their return to Court favour could not so soon destroy. Johnson, the typical Tory, loved originality, he believed in human progress, he hated West Indian slavery; if he upheld American taxation, it was on grounds of justice. Burke, the great Whig theorist, always appealed to expediency and experience; the sanctities of tradition had no more staunch upholder; his own time even seemed to him degenerate in comparison with the Middle Ages. The younger Pitt was long the idol of the Tory party, the founder

of its glory and success in modern England. But Pitt was no Conservative. The three great measures on which Liberal politicians since his time have successively staked their existence—Catholic Emancipation, Parliamentary Reform, and Free Trade—were his measures. And of these Catholic Emancipation was opposed by the Duke of Portland, Parliamentary Reform by Burke, and Free Trade by Fox; while the first and third were afterwards taken up by Pitt's disciple, Canning.

There is, however, one vital issue with respect to which the lines of party division exhibit a more unbroken continuity than with respect to any other difference of opinion. That is the question of permitting or prohibiting free criticism in politics and religion. As compared with their opponents, the Revolution Whigs had stood more or less for free speech all round; and their prolonged exercise of power had not made them entirely forgetful of the cause they originally represented. Their subsequent exile from office revived those earlier memories; and all through the French revolutionary storm a Whig remnant clung to personal freedom more ardently than ever, now that it had been recognised as not merely the privilege of Englishmen, but as the right of all mankind.

The King and the oligarchs exercised power through Parliament, and in Parliament through the House of Commons. The so-called popular Chamber did not outwardly represent the people. "One hundred and seventy-two of the English and Welsh members were returned on the direct nomination of the Treasury or of individuals. The

forty-five Scotch members were nominated by thirty-five persons. Three hundred and fifty-four members were therefore returned on the recommendation of the Treasury or of some patron."[1] But, although these 354 gentlemen were not elected by the people, it would be a mistake to suppose that they did not represent the people, or that an equal number of members elected by popular suffrage would have been better qualified to sit in the Sovereign Assembly. Merely to occupy such a position gives a sense of responsibility not necessarily associated with the exercise of demagogic arts. Even the Irish Parliament of the eighteenth century, composed as it was of nominees and managed by corruption, had that sense to some extent. Even the servile Corps Législatif of the second Napoleonic Empire successfully resisted a proposal made by its master to entail an estate on the family of one of his favourites, against the law of modern France. And when the Liberal Opposition came to muster very strong in that body they were soon joined by so many supporters of the Government as to form a working majority. The members of our unreformed Parliament no doubt sold their votes. But they would equally have sold them, without losing their seats, under any system of popular suffrage that could have been devised.

In the earlier part of the eighteenth century the Peers were in advance of the Commons, and the Commons were both then and much later in advance of average English opinion. Had the

[1] Spencer Walpole, *History of England from 1815*, vol. i., p. 117 (Cabinet ed.).

borough members of Walpole's age represented the wishes of the urban constituencies as genuinely as the county members represented the feelings of the rural constituencies, the Stuarts would probably have been restored. A century later it is not clear that a reformed Parliament would have passed Catholic Emancipation. What enabled George III. on more than one occasion to carry out a disastrous policy was that he had a majority of the country at his back.

It seems at first sight an optimistic hallucination to maintain that a system full of anomalies, the unintentional and incalculable result of one historical accident after another, should have miraculously turned out to be the best fitted for the people which had somehow blundered into it. But really no more is meant than that the old English Constitution, such as it was, fairly represented the balance of forces then at work; and above all that it organised, in a way, that liberty for the possession and preservation of which our island was famed. And, in fact, such political thinkers as Burke and Canning, in proclaiming the supreme excellence of the Constitution, rotten boroughs and all, dwelt most on the practical experience that it worked well, securing the largest amount of liberty compatible with public order. They failed to see that it fell lamentably short of what a Government ought to be, that it provided neither for social order nor for social progress, that the boasted system of checks and balances was responsible for a paralysis which the people felt obscurely, and that the only hope of salvation lay in the development of the democratic and

freethinking elements whose explosion on the Continent filled them with such dismay.

What we find, then, professing to perform the functions of government is an oligarchy always controlled and sometimes directed by the public opinion of the upper and middle classes. Sometimes opinion embodied itself in a great statesman, sometimes in a king of average judgment and ability who mistook the will of the people for his own will. The result was a moving equilibrium of competing interests, favourable to the development of individual genius; not favourable to orderly progress, to a wise economy of the national resources. So much industry, ability, and money were spent on making the Parliamentary machine work smoothly that nothing was left for securing legislative and administrative efficiency.

A theory had been gaining ground since Locke that the duty of the State goes no further than the protection of its citizens against domestic and foreign aggression. The theory may be good or bad; but, at any rate, the duties it recognises were not fulfilled by the so-called Government of England. There was no police to speak of; the roads were infested with highwaymen, the streets with footpads and pickpockets, the seas with pirates, the avenues of credit with forgers. Groups of irritated interests appealed to their Parliamentary representatives for protection; it was given by extending the death penalty to such a multitude of trivial offences that in many cases the wronged individuals would not prosecute, or juries would not convict, or judges would not condemn, or the

executive would not carry out the sentence, with the result that depredations were multiplied by the chances of impunity; while the prisons, instead of being deterrents or preventives, were so mismanaged as to become nurseries for the propagation of crime and disease.

Foreign aggression being chiefly conceived under the form of foreign industrial competition in the shape of imported goods, it was resisted by prohibitive or protective duties, calling into existence a host of smugglers who introduced the competing products duty free. The division of military authority between the King and the Parliamentary War Minister fatally undermined the efficiency of the army, which, besides, was weak and ill-officered through the whole hierarchy of command. As it happens, fleets cannot be sailed without a relatively high degree of professional ability; and in the case of the English navy the supply, to some extent, corresponded with the demand. The country was guaranteed against invasion, in a military sense, by an Admiralty which seems to have been the best-equipped branch of the public service, and was at least better than any on the Continent. Still, at a great crisis of the national fortunes England's maritime supremacy was nearly wrecked by corruption in high places; while on that and another occasion the national security was still further hazarded by the English Government's insistence on the exercise of certain alleged rights, which the neutral powers united in arms to repel. It remains to add that, as a maritime conscription would have been repugnant to English ideas of liberty, violent

impressment of merchant sailors was used as a means for recruiting the fleet, to the general satisfaction of free-born landsmen.

Not only did the Government fail to provide adequately for public order and safety, but it allowed the machinery of justice to be perverted into a means for the spoliation of its subjects. Viewed from the standpoint of scientific jurisprudence, English civil law was a chaos; as an instrument for filling the coffers of lawyers at the expense of litigants it was contrived with consummate skill; while in applying it to that sinister purpose counsel on both sides might reckon on the cordial co-operation of the judge, for he regarded them as the parties whose interest he sat on the bench to protect.

A secular power that failed to perform the primary duties of government found its appropriate pendant in a spiritual power that could neither edify nor instruct. Through the eighteenth century the Church of England had no other object than to preserve what she had won in the seventeenth century—that is to say, a monopoly of those endowments and privileges, which for the higher clergy meant a position of opulent and dignified idleness, and for the lower clergy a position of indigent and despicable idleness. As a body these men supported every reactionary measure, initiating no reform themselves, and opposing the reforms initiated by others. The great movement for the evangelisation of the people known as Methodism was carried out without their authority and against their wishes.

The universities whose wealth they monopolised were seats neither of learning, nor of research, nor of liberal culture. Controversial writings directed against rationalism were the most imposing clerical performances of the age; but of the two strongest apologists, one, Bishop Butler, had been bred a Dissenter, and the other, Archdeacon Paley, borrowed his arguments from a Dissenting divine, Dr. Lardner.

At the beginning of this chapter it was remarked that political liberty consists in two things—in the subjection of the Government to public opinion exercised through legal channels, and in the unhindered play of individual activity within the limits of mutual respect. Now the development of English individuality was great precisely because the governing powers were so feebly organised. It was this that, in the absence of any steady or coherent system of training and policy, gave England such original statesmen as Chatham, Clive, and Warren Hastings; such party leaders as Bolingbroke, Burke, and Fox; such generals as Marlborough, Peterborough, Clive, Coote, and Wolfe; such religious apostles as Law, Wesley, and Whitefield; such reformers as Bentham and Howard; such a historian as Gibbon; such philosophers as Berkeley, Hume, and Burke; such novelists as Richardson and Fielding; such a humorist as Sterne; such a critic of life as Johnson; such mechanical inventors as Brindley, Hargreaves, Arkwright, and Watt; such explorers as Cook, Bruce, and Mungo Park. On the Continent, also, the eighteenth century was a period of great

individual initiative; but, for one thing, in no Continental country did it attain such a diversified development as here; and, for another thing, there also it owed much to political and social disorganisation, although of a different kind—the sub-division of Italy and Germany among many rulers, the growing contempt for all rule in France, the continual migration of eminent men from one country to another.

This last factor told also for much in the evolution of British genius and thought. Among English men of letters, Swift, Berkeley, Farquhar, Burke, Goldsmith, and Malone were born and educated in Ireland; Steele, Sterne, Francis, and Sheridan were of Irish birth and English education. Toland, the founder of English Deism, was an Irishman of Scotch education; Hutcheson, the founder of Scotch philosophy, was born in Ulster; Hume spent his most studious years in France; and if Adam Smith's six years' residence at Oxford not unnaturally prejudiced him against endowments, it saved him from Hume's prejudice against England; Gibbon first found his true self at Lausanne; Bentham was first revealed to his own countrymen through the French translations of Dumont, a Genevese refugee; Smollett, the first novelist of the English navy, and Boswell, the devoted biographer of England's most characteristic worthy, were Scotchmen born and bred.

This expansion of the English intellect was not directed towards high or ideal ends. Discounting Scotland—whose achievements, belonging as they do to a distinct social organisation, should be

separately estimated—England in the eighteenth century shows conspicuous literary poverty as compared with what the preceding and following ages produced; while in science and philosophy, after the exhaustion of Newton's generation, there came a period of total sterility, followed by a period of gradual recovery due to foreign influences. When the revival comes, it is carried on by the labours of two distinguished amateurs, Cavendish and Priestley, neither of them occupying an official position, and of Sir William Herschel, who was not only an amateur but a foreigner. The last alone formed great and comprehensive views on the constitution of nature. Not until some years after the French Revolution did English men of science rise to the construction of truly philosophical explanations of phenomena.

When we compare this sterility of the higher English intellect with the contemporary achievements of Scotland, considered not merely in reference to the much smaller wealth and population of the northern kingdom, but absolutely, weight for weight; or, again, when we think of what was being done at the same time in France, formerly so far behind England—we cannot but seek for a general cause of the disparity in some difference of social conditions.

The decline of English science has been explained by a continued survival of theological bigotry, with which a further development would have brought it into direct collision. But theological prejudices were then more potent in Scotland and France than among ourselves; nor does there seem any reason why religious beliefs should be more

alarmed by further progress in the higher mathematics, or in physics, chemistry, and natural history, than they had been by the researches of Newton, Boyle, and Ray. Geology was destined to prove a more irreconcilable study; but the speculations of Buffon and Hutton on the subject do not seem to have been hampered by clerical opposition. Moreover, the great religious revival of the eighteenth century, so far from being associated with a further decline of English science, coincided, step by step, with its resuscitation.

We must look for the real cause among more material agencies. Ideal pursuits in general declined because the English intellect was diverted towards the creation and enjoyment of wealth. It was an era of vast territorial expansion, avowedly sought after with a view to the extension of commerce; of great mechanical inventions chiefly intended to facilitate manufacturing industry, of sweeping enclosures made in order to bring fresh soil under cultivation, of corresponding improvements in the means of communication and transport. In reference to this movement, it was no misfortune, but the contrary, that government should be so torpid, that individual initiative should have the freest play where it was most needed, that protectionist legislation should not be aggravated by misguided attempts to supervise the mechanism of industry. Even clerical inertness told as a negative condition of conquest. Clive and Hastings could never have accomplished their great work had a swarm of missionaries been sent out to rouse Oriental fanaticism against the rule of the Feringhees.

It had been believed in the seventeenth century that the new physical sciences imported from Italy and Germany would lead to an immediate and enormous increase of material wealth as well as to new triumphs over death and disease. Except for being premature, the expectation was right, but right only by accident. What Bacon really anticipated has never been accomplished; nor did Newton succeed in the great object of his studies, which was the transmutation of baser metals into gold. With the failure of such hopes English statesmen withdrew their interest from the investigations of the Royal Society. Probably their opinions in the matter are pretty faithfully reflected in Swift's account of the philosophers of Laputa, written, be it remembered, by one who had human well-being passionately at heart, and grudged every intellectual exercise not given to its promotion. But science had now reached a point where it could not be carried further without disinterested love of knowledge on the part of its professors, upheld by a like feeling on the side of the public, nor without considerable endowments from public or private sources. This truth is singularly illustrated by the lives of the only three savants that England for a long period had to show. Cavendish possessed enormous private means; Priestley was first the librarian and afterwards the pensioner of Lord Shelburne; Herschel owed the leisure needed for his observations to the munificence of George III. Maladministration of the public funds left nothing over for the promotion of liberal studies; and the universities, which should have been homes of research, had allowed their professorships to lapse

into sinecures for the additional sustenance of hard-drinking idle Fellows. To draw in as much wealth as possible in the shape of students' fees, and to give as little in exchange for it as possible, was the object of the ruling powers at Oxford and Cambridge. All pass-examinations were made easy, and young lords got their degrees without being examined at all. Scotland and Ireland, being much poorer countries, felt the need of qualifying men to work for their living, and therefore a much more efficient education was given in their universities.

The decline of literature presents a more difficult problem, and any explanations that are offered here must be taken merely as suggestions towards a possible solution. There was, first of all, as with philosophy, science, and scholarship, the diversion of creative genius into the more lucrative channels of politics, business, and mechanical industry, or, failing these, of parasitism on the holders of wealth and power with little taste for the disinterested activities of the spirit. There was, in the next instance, amid the general decline of authority, a most unhappy erection of authority where it was least to be desired—in the field of poetry. This invasion was due to the influence of France, which had set in with the Restoration. The facility and charm of French literature would in any case have made it attractive, and at this period its attractiveness was enormously enhanced by the absence of any rival except the classic literatures of Greece and Rome, which, so far from counteracting it, contributed to the same effect. For the French themselves were

enslaved to the classic tradition of Rome—that is, to the conventions of a literary school artificially brought into existence by the lessons of Greek rhetoricians and of Greek philosophy in its old age. Hence, poetry as expression was tied down to such monotonous metres as lent themselves most readily to the dictation of pedants; while poetry as ideas was made an instrument of instruction, indirectly as a satire on social vices, or directly as a series of elegant platitudes. And this petty didacticism overflowed, to its great detriment, into the realm of prose fiction, where the highest literary originality of the century had sought out a last refuge and defence.

One idea of Greek philosophy proved a saving element in this desert of pedantry and convention —the idea of Nature. It had been the master-thought of Stoicism; and on the downfall of Aristotelian Scholasticism the Stoics once more came to the front as leaders of European thought. Their "natural religion" became the fashionable form of theology, their appeal to nature the watch-word of morality, their dogma of natural rights, and more particularly the right to liberty, the rallying-cry of politics. In taste it took the form —at first not very sincere, but gradually growing more serious—of a preference for rural solitudes to crowded streets, bringing in the idyll as a competitor with the satire, the elegy, and the moral apologue in poetry; in painting, the landscape as a competitor with the portrait; in gardening, the wilderness as at least an adjunct to the trim parterre.

This worship of Nature led to an increased

interest in the common people—who were supposed to be in closer touch with her than the rich—and in uncivilised races; to the study of primitive literatures, chiefly as represented by ballad poetry; and to a re-interpretation of Homer, Shakespeare, and the Hebrew Scriptures as expressions of natural feeling. In this way also the Middle Ages came to attract increased attention, under the impression that simplicity and individuality flourished to a greater extent at that period than in more civilised times. But Romanticism, to call it by its later name, was not then the reactionary movement that it afterwards became when the consequences of the French Revolution threw men back on ideals dissociated from the application of reason to politics and religion. Nor did the mediævalising or Romantic movement at first place itself in conscious opposition to the study of Greek and Roman literature, however much its votaries may have revolted from the spurious classicism of their age. The two enthusiasms harmonised perfectly, the only innovation being a tendency to concentrate attention on the older and greater masters to the exclusion of their later imitators.

The great wave of enthusiasm that flooded English thought and feeling in the late thirties of the eighteenth century, bringing about the fall of Sir Robert Walpole and the rise of the elder Pitt, seems to have flowed partly from the combination of classical with romantic studies, so prominent also a little later in the poetry of Collins and of Gray. And parallel with this somewhat pagan movement we find the great Methodist

revival, less disconnected with it than might seem. For both involved an appeal to popular passion, a return to those primordial sources of inspiration whence the supreme political and religious leaders of other ages have derived their power.

The movement against convention in literature struggled fitfully for half a century before it could make any headway. The emotional and popular movement in religion was more successful. Outside the Church large masses were won over to Methodism. Inside the Church and the Nonconformist bodies, under the name of Evangelicalism, it commanded an ever-increasing number of adherents, and finally became associated with the agitation for the suppression of the slave trade—an agitation, however, first begun and then mainly carried on by the Quakers. The religious revival may also have had something to do with the efforts for prison reform made by Howard, himself a deeply religious character; but it is among the Unitarians rather than the Evangelicals that his chief coadjutors are to be found.

It was natural that English idealism, whatever its inspiration, should concentrate its opposition to English mammonism on the most criminal and scandalous iniquity that had been fostered by our unscrupulous greed. This was the African slave trade. As an important branch of British industry the traffic in human beings dates from the Peace of Utrecht (1713). By a special arrangement between the Crowns of England and Spain, it was then provided that English merchants should have the privilege of importing any number of negroes up

to 4,800 annually for thirty years into the Spanish-American colonies at a fixed duty per head, the profits being equally divided between the Kings of England and Spain. Under cover of this arrangement English goods were smuggled into Spanish territory to such an extent as to provoke a war between the two countries in 1739, when the allotted term had not yet expired. To make up for this deficiency it was provided by the Treaty of Aix la Chapelle that the trade should be resumed for four years more. After that we hear no more about the privilege of supplying slaves as the subject of an express stipulation with Spain. But meanwhile England's own North American colonies had come to provide a far more important market for human flesh, raising the export from Africa to an annual average of 20,000, and in a year of exceptional activity to 50,000.[1] The period following the American War of Independence showed a still further development, the annual average from 1783 to 1793 amounting to 74,000.[2] Of the number torn from their African homes, one in eight died on board ship; if it was desirable in the interests of the owners to lighten the cargo, they could legally be flung overboard like cattle.[3] Of those who reached the West Indies seventeen per cent. "died in about nine weeks, and not more than fifty per cent. lived to become effective labourers in our islands."[4] At the same time the

[1] Cunningham, *Growth of English Industry and Commerce: Modern Times*, p. 317.

[2] Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. vii., p. 366 (Cabinet ed.).

[3] *Ibid*, p. 367.

[4] *Ibid*, p. 369.

continuous demand for slaves fomented savage wars between the tribes of the African Continent, reducing its inhabitants to a state of barbarism whence they have not yet recovered.

To our people at home the trade that caused such horrors was a subject of unmixed congratulation. It encouraged English shipping, bringing into the port of Liverpool alone a profit of nearly £300,000 a year.[1] "It took off a considerable amount of English manufactures"; and it conferred a still more considerable indirect benefit on our industry by discouraging the growth of manufactures in the colonies, the effect of slave labour being to confine their industry to planting, with the happy result also of preventing English mechanics from emigrating to North America.[2] Accordingly, when the colonies imposed a heavy duty on the importation of negroes, whose increasing numbers were inspiring them with just alarm, "the law was rescinded by the Crown."[3]

To discourage by such indirect measures the growth of manufacturing industry in America was not enough for the governing classes in England; when certain manufactures came into existence they were forcibly suppressed. The colonies were, indeed, permitted to manufacture pig and bar iron, for in so doing they helped to supply the home industry with the raw material at a cheaper rate; but it was provided that "no mill or other engine for rolling iron, or furnace for making steel, should be permitted."[4] "The manufacture of hats was a flourishing trade, but it was rigorously put

[1] Lecky, vii., p. 366.
[2] Lecky, iv., p. 43.
[3] Cunningham, p. 315.
[4] Lecky, ii., p. 239.

down,"[1] and the exportation of woollen goods from one colony to another was also prohibited.[2] Their sea-borne trade, "so far as the most important articles were concerned, was limited to the British dominions."[3] In Ireland the woollen and glass industries were effectually strangled by trade prohibitions imposed for the benefit of English manufacturers.

Neither in Ireland nor in America was this abuse of power due solely to the covetousness of private interests. It partly arose from the divided and disorganised state of the central Government. The English Parliament did not wish Ireland to prosper lest the Crown, by raising a large revenue from that kingdom, might become independent of their support. And neither Crown nor Parliament wished America to be self-supporting lest she should be enabled to break off her connection with the mother country. As a result of this mismanagement the colonies were lost, while Ireland was preserved only to become a source of future difficulty and danger.

Nowhere was the mingled weakness and strength of England so signally displayed as in her dealings with India. We owe the conquest and retention of that magnificent dependency to the free and enterprising spirit, so characteristic of the English genius, displayed by the servants of the East India Company. But India once won was nearly ruined, first by the unchecked greed of a horde of hungry adventurers suddenly let loose on her inhabitants,

[1] Cunningham, p. 329. [2] *Ibid.* [3] Lecky, ii., p. 238.

then by the administrative chaos resulting from the transfer of party conflicts from London to Calcutta, by the imposition of English law and an English judicature on a people of wholly alien traditions, and a Government jealous of any competing authority, by a new system of landed ownership which converted Hindoo tax-farmers into the likeness of English country gentlemen. Practical unreason reached its climax in the impeachment of Warren Hastings. Hastings was a wise and beneficent ruler, sweet-natured in private life, and popular with the Hindoos. Yet Burke, the great denouncer of Jacobinism, under the stress of party politics anticipated the rant of Jacobin orators in their attacks on the tyrant Capet by reviling him as the common enemy of the human race.

Yet, mistaken as were the Whigs in singling out the greatest benefactor of the Empire for the object of their attack, the attack itself probably led to the better government of India. It certainly excited popular interest in the subject, and was inconsistent with the system of leaving things to take care of themselves.

The policy of letting things alone suffered a remarkable exception in the one case where it might with advantage have been followed; and the genius of the century found its happiest exercise in making war on commercial restrictions. Adam Smith showed in the *Wealth of Nations* that capital and labour were most profitably employed in the ways spontaneously chosen by the self-interest of the parties principally concerned in their application to the production of commodities. By

the simple action of economic causes every individual would be told off to do the work for which he was best fitted by nature; and similarly the inhabitants of every country would take to growing or manufacturing what it was best qualified by circumstances to yield; and an unfettered system of exchange would enable them to supply each other's wants in exact proportion to their respective demands.

Smith's economic theory fell in admirably with the traditions of English liberty as they had been organised by Locke, and justified, on unexpected grounds, the principle that government should be limited to the maintenance of national integrity, public order, and private faith. Where the theory failed was principally in accounting for Adam Smith himself. His book advocates the complete surrender of the higher education to private enterprise—which, according to him, has succeeded admirably in teaching women just what they ought to know—and yet, as a great thinker and teacher, he was essentially a product of the Scotch University system, still further developed by long residence at Oxford, and perfected by the tenure of a professor's chair at Glasgow; while Pitt, one of the first statesmen to put Smith's principles into practice, had been prepared for his great office by long years of studious seclusion at Cambridge.

As regards the education of the people, however, Adam Smith held other views. He considered that it ought not to be left to private enterprise, but that as a matter of public interest it should receive public assistance and direction. In Scotland the want was supplied by an excellent system of

parochial teaching; in England popular education took on a degrading character; and, although the charity schools begun under Queen Anne continued to multiply through the century, a name carrying with it such sordid and repulsive associations was little likely to attract the children of self-respecting parents. Elsewhere Protestantism had at least the good effect of diminishing illiteracy. In this country the division of authority among a number of rival religious bodies, while favourable to religious liberty, proved unfavourable to elementary instruction; indirectly because it weakened the Government, and directly because it fomented jealousies which prevented the different sects from agreeing on a common scheme. And a further obstacle was found in the plutocratic spirit, which deliberately opposed the education of the working classes on the plea that it would unfit them for the performance of manual labour. At a later period the governing classes feared that, if the newspapers were widely read, their own tenure of power would be less secure; while the clergy held, not without reason, that the diffusion of knowledge would be fatal to their Establishment.

As compared, however, with the institutions directly created by law for the benefit of the poor, the charity schools deserve nothing but praise. The system of parochial relief established under Elizabeth had become, from being left to itself, a most calamitous institution. It meant oppression and enslavement to the labourers, civil war under the form of costly litigation to adjoining parishes. For each parish, being chargeable with the maintenance of its poor, tried to shuffle the burden on

to its neighbours, with the result that the actions at law regarding settlements and removals previous to the reform of 1834 seldom cost less than from £300,000 to £350,000 a year.[1] A poor man was not allowed to migrate from the parish to which he belonged without a certificate from the parochial authorities, who could give or withhold it as they pleased. He could be forcibly removed from a parish where he had not obtained a settlement, even without becoming chargeable on the rates; nor could he marry without leave from the authorities. To prevent the growth of a pauper population cottages were pulled down and new ones were not allowed to be built. The aim of the overseer "was to depopulate his parish; to prevent the poor from obtaining a settlement; to make the workhouse a terror by placing it under the management of a bully; and by all kinds of chicanery to keep down the rates at whatever cost to the comfort and morality of the poor."[2]

The parochial system bred a regular slave trade. When the manufacturers wanted labour they got it from the workhouses in the shape of pauper children submitted to their inspection by the overseers, picked out to suit their requirements, and handed over to them "nominally as apprentices, but really as mere slaves, who got no wages, and whom it was not worth while even to feed or clothe properly, because they were so cheap, and their places could be easily supplied. It was often arranged by the parish authorities, in order to get

[1] McCulloch's edition of the *Wealth of Nations,* p. 65, *note.*

[2] Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians,* vol. i., pp. 91–2.

rid of the imbeciles, that one idiot should be taken with every twenty sane children."[1]

All other victims of oppression throughout the Empire who could not help themselves found defenders or advocates in Parliament or in the Press. Voices were raised to plead the cause of the despoiled Hindoo, of the kidnapped African, of the outlawed Catholic, of the Colonial rebel; nor were they raised in vain. But for these little ones, for England's own orphan children, no justice or mercy was ever asked, no plea ever heard, no account ever taken, except indeed as an asset in the national wealth, to increase which they were tortured to death. In their brief passage from the squalid cradle to the nameless grave, without play-time, without Sunday,[2] as much as possible without sleep, they knew neither love nor light nor joy, nor any hope, except, perhaps, hope for the final and everlasting rest, of which they could not be deprived.

The economic principle of *laissez-faire* must not be made responsible for these abuses, nor yet the theory of natural law as opposed to artificial regulation; for nothing can be a greater infringement on individual liberty than making children work without wages, and nothing more unnatural than making them work for eighteen hours a day. Here and everywhere the root of the evil was that the State should abdicate those functions of supervision and control in whose absence delegated authorities are sure to degenerate into instruments of rapacious tyranny.

Bentham, Adam Smith's younger contemporary,

[1] H. de B. Gibbins, *Industry in England*, p. 389. [2] *Ibid.*

in some ways his disciple, and destined to absorb the whole movement started by the great Scotchman into his own school of social reform, was not, like him, a friend to popular liberty, but a Tory, and even an absolutist. This was due in part to early training, but still more to the bias given by his pursuits. His labours had for their object the recasting of England's whole civil and criminal jurisprudence, and he seems to have expected more help towards putting his schemes into execution from the power of the Crown than from the initiative of a governing Assembly. The examples of what had been done by Frederick the Great in Prussia, by Joseph II. in Austria, by Catherine II. in Russia, by Charles III. in Spain, by Pombal in Portugal, and of what might have been done with autocratic power by Turgot in France, were well fitted to encourage such a belief. At any rate, Bentham's sympathies went neither with the revolted colonists in America nor with the revolutionists in France. Late in life his hopes were fixed on a purely democratic legislature as the most promising instrument of reform; but he never believed, any more than Burke did, in liberty as a natural right, nor, indeed, in natural rights of any kind; and his passion for submitting human conduct to a system of minute regulation put him out of sympathy with the spirit of liberty as such. *Laissez-faire* had, in fact, no more than an accidental and transitory connection with Bentham's school; and we shall be prepared to recognise, against the general opinion, how much his disciples had to do with the great constructive and centralising reforms of a later day.

Before closing this chapter a few words must be added in reference to the great religious movement which had been in progress for fifty years before the French Revolution. In no sense a reaction against the Deism which preceded it, but rather an upheaval of popular ignorance and superstition through the upper crust of society, it was represented outside the Establishment by the two divergent sects of Methodism, and within the Establishment by what has been called the Evangelical succession, from John Newton to Henry Venn, in literature by Cowper, in politics latterly by Wilberforce. The movement was essentially pietistic—that is, it strove to draw off men's attention from the interests of the present life and of this world to the destinies that awaited them after death. Practically it made for a severe, almost ascetic morality, for charitable attention to sufferers, and for at least one act of public beneficence—the abolition of the slave trade. On the other hand, most of its leaders took the reactionary side in politics ; while their frugal habits, by promoting the accumulation of capital, indirectly promoted that love of money for its own sake which had already proved so unfavourable to the higher idealism in England. Some of the Cambridge Evangelicals were scholars and mathematicians ; but the approaching development of science, criticism, and literature in a sense opposed to the old dogmatic theology was certain to be strenuously resisted by their disciples. Already, indeed, faith and reason were tending to draw apart. John Wesley was grossly superstitious ; Cowper's naturally large and liberal mind was thrown completely off its balance by a logical

application of his Calvinistic convictions. The highest intellect of England was becoming hostile or indifferent to what had nothing stronger than mysticism or tradition in its favour.

Chapter II.

THE GODS ARRIVE

The first effect of the French Revolution on English society, when its full significance became appreciated, was to give all existing tendencies a more excited self-consciousness, a clearer appreciation of their true principles and ultimate goals. There had been for some time past a number of Englishmen who combined democratic politics with a philosophic theory of human progress and free-thinking views about religion. A few of them were opposed to the perpetuity of the marriage-bond. What was happening in Paris seemed to open out a more immediate prospect for the realisation of their ideals than could have been hoped before. From that moment English Radicalism, as a more or less definite creed and party, came into existence, and has continued active ever since. Their sympathy with the French people gave the Radicals a rallying-point and a sign for mutual recognition; but it would be a mistake to suppose that they drew any peculiar inspiration from the ideas of Voltaire, of Rousseau, or of the Encyclopédists. Mary Wollstonecraft has been called a disciple of Rousseau, but in advocating the higher education and political enfranchisement of women she directly contravenes the teaching of his *Émile*. In theory the French Jacobinism founded on

Rousseau's *Contrat Social* stood for absolute government exercised by the numerical majority of the adult male population; in practice it stood for absolute government exercised by a small ring falsely claiming to represent the people. Godwin's *Political Justice,* on the other hand, is in some ways a gospel of anarchy without the constable; it altogether condemns coercion, and proposes that the business of society should be carried on entirely by reasoning, just as in William Morris's *News from Nowhere.* In practice Godwin objected even to the party system in politics as an irrational surrender of one's own individual judgment to the control of others. Here we have the old spirit of English liberty asserting itself under an extreme form without a parallel in France, but preceded in Germany by a similar manifesto from the pen of Wilhelm von Humboldt.

A more opportune and practical result of the Revolution was a revival of the agitation for Parliamentary Reform. Chatham, to whom popular support meant everything, had long since proposed to place the representation of the people on a broader basis; and the younger Pitt had three times attempted to carry out his father's ideas, on the last occasion as Prime Minister at the head of a powerful following. But neither the King nor the majority of the House would support him; and the country seems to have been either indifferent or inert. His scheme involved no more than a redistribution of seats without any extension of the franchise. The Duke of Richmond had gone very much further, proposing universal suffrage, equal electoral districts, and annual Parliaments; and

the same extreme position was adopted on the ground of natural right by the democratic societies founded after the French Revolution.

Burke had argued passionately against Pitt's very moderate Reform Bill; the more advanced democratic theories almost threw him into hysterics. Dr. Price had compared the revolt of the French people against despotism with the expulsion of James II. from England a hundred years before. Not content with pointing out the very important points of contrast between the modes of action respectively adopted by the two nations on those occasions, Burke proceeded to lay down principles of political philosophy which would make all progress impossible, and certainly would not justify the methods by which the relation of the Church to the State and of the King to Parliament were finally reconstituted in England. While very properly repudiating theories of abstract right and replacing them by an appeal to expediency as the supreme arbiter in practical issues, he fails to see that there are times—and the time when he wrote was one of them—when revolutionary methods are alone expedient: because alone possible, as a means of deliverance from intolerable suffering. And he also fails to see that the appeal to natural rights, however fallacious in its absolute extension to all times and places, had at that particular crisis, nor at that alone, a relative justification on the narrowest grounds of expediency, as the only rallying-cry by which multitudes of famishing human beings could be brought together to act as one man.

The truth is that Burke looked on any attempt

to remodel the existing state of things as something very like an impious interference with the divinely appointed order of nature. Politically he had always been a Conservative. In standing up for the Whig families and their system of party government against the personal rule of George III., in resisting the imposition of imperial taxation on America, in upholding the immunities of the native Hindoo princes against Warren Hastings, his motive had been respect for established usage. And now this reverence for ancient prescription had gained strength by being brought into relation with his equally steadfast religious convictions. The appeal to natural right in France had been preceded by an appeal to the religion of nature against revelation, latterly passing into an appeal to natural science against supernatural theology in every form ; nor did it justify the Freethinkers in Burke's eyes that their attacks had been primarily directed against the Roman Catholic Church, for it had been the Church of his mother. The secularisation of Church property by the National Assembly had, in his opinion, been one of their worst crimes. To find the Revolution assuming a more and more anti-clerical aspect must have more and more confirmed his identification of democracy with atheism ; and the sympathy of the leading English Unitarians with France would illustrate the sinister tendencies of any departure from the traditional orthodoxy.

If the revolutionists, with their doctrine of abstract rights, were in what Auguste Comte calls the metaphysical stage of social science, Burke is still less advanced ; he remains in the theological

stage. The nearest approach to political Positivism had been made by Bentham with his doctrine of utility.

It may be said that prediction is the test of truth, and that Burke's principles were verified by the fact of their having enabled him to foretell the future course of the Revolution. But to anticipate the coming Terror and the final subjection of France to a military despot needed no extraordinary sagacity. The known character of the French people, read in conjunction with the lessons of Thucydides and Plutarch and the omens of 1789, were enough to suggest the most dismal prophecies of democratic excess; while Cromwell's career was there as a warning to all men of what a violent revolution must necessarily bring about. And, in fact, before the *Reflections* appeared Lafayette, of all men, had been pointed to as the coming dictator.

To say that the fated enslavement of France when it came would be exceptionally rigorous, because every barrier to tyranny had been levelled by the National Assembly, was no doubt an acute observation. But in Burke's mouth it has only the merit of a new application. For Montesquieu had already said of the English that, if they once lost their liberty, no people on earth would be so enslaved, for want of those great ecclesiastical and legal corporations which in other countries were interposed between the sovereign and his subjects. In point of fact, the remark was quite untrue of England, and very imperfectly true of France. Napoleon only maintained his tyranny at the cost of continual wars; and the same administrative

machinery in the hands of his successor proved quite insufficient to keep the spirit of liberty permanently under.

Where Burke was original, where he trusted to the guidance of his peculiar political philosophy, events proved him utterly wrong. So far from ruining France, the Revolution raised her within a few years to an unprecedented height of military power; within a generation her population had grown twenty-five per cent., with a more than proportionate augmentation of wealth—a rate of increase never known before; within two generations it inspired a literature and a philosophy richer and more splendid than that of her Augustan age. All who have read the *Reflections* will recognise how much the contrary of what Burke expected these results have been.

There is, however, a sense in which this great man may more truly be called a prophet, and truly transcended his age. He created Conservative philosophy—in other words, he constructed the theoretical barriers that have ever since been used to shut out political reforms of every kind. No other thinker has so well exhibited the subtlety, complexity, and obscurity of the forces by which societies are bound together, or the incalculable consequences to be expected from their paralysis; no one else has made more of the traditions by which the present is interwoven with and grows out of the past.

Burke also led the way in basing his hostility to democracy on the danger to property of a wide suffrage, and the necessity of property to the stability of society. But both he and his followers

erred by an imperfect appreciation of what they saw. The forces of social cohesion are too strong to lie at the mercy of revolutionists, as France soon proved by recovering her unity and balance far more quickly than after the troubles of the sixteenth century, when religion reigned supreme. The security of private property, too, has proved much greater and much more independent of political organisation than Burke imagined. The propertied classes have shown a singular knack of coming to the top after every revolution and under every form of government; while the wide diffusion of landed property among the community, where it has been effected, seems to make for rather than against the conservative spirit.

Another achievement of Burke's was to capture the Romantic movement for Conservatism, to associate the maintenance of existing institutions with a distrust of modern civilisation, a reactionary enthusiasm for the ideals of mediæval chivalry. There had till then been no such association. Walpole, a leader in the Romantic movement, was a Whig; and its great enemy, Johnson, a Tory of modern tastes. The Revolution, as a revolt against mediæval institutions, tended to unite all mediæval sympathies in an alliance against it.

Among the replies to Burke, Mackintosh's *Vindiciæ Gallicæ* won great celebrity for its author at the time, but is now never read, and only remembered as an instance of his political instability, for in a few years he became a convert to Burke's philosophy, and before the end of the

century was attacking with extreme violence in his public lectures what he conceived to be the principles of the Revolution. Mackintosh was pre-eminently a historical scholar, and his favourite studies had supplied him with two guiding ideas. One was the essential mutability of all human institutions ; the other was the relative adaptation of all institutions to the circumstances in which they have originated. It will be observed that this is merely a more specific way of saying that institutions are evolved in response to the conditions of their environment; and, in fact, we owe to this writer the famous aphorism that constitutions are not made, but grow. It is said to have done the cause of Continental liberty incalculable harm, and certainly, if taken literally, would have destroyed it. The analogy between institutions and organisms does not really go very far; and, where they differ, institutions are immeasurably the more adaptable of the two. The reason is very simple : societies of human beings are capable of re-arranging their structures in conscious accordance with the lessons of experience, and especially they have a power of conscious imitation which plants and animals have not. Representative government and trial by jury may or may not be good things, but, at any rate, they are easy things to copy, and actually have been copied by nations from whose traditions they were widely removed—sometimes receiving improvements from the imitator which might be advantageously adopted by the original model. All imitations, to be successful, imply, of course, a certain degree of civilisation on the part of those who adopt them; and it may be truly said of certain

communities that they are not fit for self-government as we understand it; but it might be said of others with equal truth that they are not fit for steam engines, which nevertheless it would be absurd to count among the things that are not made, but grow.

Mackintosh preserves so much of his early Liberalism as to make liberty the object of all government.[1] But then he defines liberty as security against wrong. In this way he keeps up the metaphysical illusion of his opponents under a more confused form. They made liberty a right; he turns rights into modes of liberty. Oddly enough, with his historical view of government pushed, as we have seen, to the extreme of evolutionary conservatism, he combines the genuinely metaphysical notion that there are no discoveries in morality, instancing in support of his position the Pentateuchal legislation, which accepts slavery, polygamy, and blood revenge as things of course. What he wanted was probably to form a coalition of moralists in all ages against the excesses of the Revolution.

Notwithstanding its inauspicious title, Thomas Paine, in his pamphlet on *The Rights of Man,* is sometimes more modern-minded than either Burke or Mackintosh. The first part of that work is chiefly occupied with a historical vindication of the French people, and does not concern us here. The second part is an argument for abolishing the English monarchy and putting a republic in its

[1] *Miscellaneous Works,* vol. i., p. 372.

place—an utterly impracticable proposal, and more likely at that time to hamper than to help the cause of reform. Paine had done much by his other great pamphlet, *Common Sense,* to persuade the American colonists to organise themselves as an independent republic; and on the occasion of Louis XVI.'s flight to Varennes he had vainly urged the French people to follow their example. The good effect of taking his advice in the one case, and the bad effect of not taking it in the other, may have inspired him with too much confidence in his favourite panacea. After all, Burke and Pitt were still more fatally blind to political realities when they tried to destroy the new French Government by force of arms.

Apart from cheap criticism, the interesting thing is to note what was Paine's idea of government, irrespective of its form. "It is," he tells us, "nothing more than a national association; and the object of this association is the good of all, as well individually as collectively. Every man wishes to pursue his occupation and to enjoy the fruits of his labour and the produce of his property in peace and safety, and with the least possible expense. When these things are accomplished all the objects for which governments ought to be established are answered."[1] The phrase "fruits of labour" is open to conflicting interpretations, and is understood by some who have adopted it in the sense of a collectivist organisation of industry. But this is very unlikely to have entered Paine's thoughts; so far we may class him as an individualist like

[1] *Rights of Man,* Part II., p. 60 (first ed.).

Mackintosh. Nevertheless, his criticisms on the actual Government of England, and still more his suggestions for its reform, imply a strong leaning to what would now be called socialism. It is, he complains, "so absorbed by foreign affairs and the means of raising taxes that it seems to exist for no other purpose. Domestic concerns are neglected; and with respect to regular law there is scarcely such a thing."[1] "When we see old age going to the workhouse and youth to the gallows, something must be wrong in the system of government."[2] "Civil government does not consist in executions, but in making that provision for the instruction of youth and the support of age as *(sic)* to exclude, as much as possible, profligacy from the one, and despair from the other."[3]

Accordingly he proceeds to offer a scheme for old-age pensions, and another for universal elementary instruction; the cost to be provided by an enormous reduction in the present establishment, and by a progressive income-tax on landed property, amounting, in the case of large estates, to something like fifty per cent. The needs of elementary education are to be met by a truly English system of subsidies; that is, by a grant of so much per child, with orders to the parish officials to see that it is sent to school. On the other hand, no provision is made for schools or teachers. A few old people in every village will readily come forward to meet the new demand, and will be perfectly qualified for the office.[4]

Paine was prosecuted for high treason, and in all

[1] *Rights of Man*, p. 56. [2] P. 90. [3] *Ibid.* [4] P. 132.

probability only escaped death by a timely retreat to France. He was tried in his absence by a special jury, found guilty, and outlawed. But by the end of the following year (1793) 200,000 copies of the *Rights of Man* had been sold; and the number would probably have been much greater had not the sale been made penal.

With the execution of Louis XVI. a royalist reign of terror began in England, having for its object to suppress the utterance of liberal opinions in print or even by word of mouth. John Frost, an attorney, exclaimed in a public room: "I am for equality and no King!" He was tried, found guilty, sentenced to six months' imprisonment in Newgate, to stand for one hour in the pillory at Charing Cross, and to find security for his good behaviour for five years; his name was also struck off the roll of attorneys. The part of the sentence relating to the pillory was not executed—according to Frost himself, from fear of the populace. "William Winterbotham, a Dissenting minister at Plymouth," was alleged to have "preached two sermons in which he instructed his auditory that the laws were not equal, the application of public money corrupt and vicious; that the people of this country had as much right as those of France to stand up for their liberty; that the King had no title to the throne any more than the Stuarts had, and that it was time for the people to come forward in defence of their rights." Several persons swore that they were present and heard no such words; nevertheless, the preacher was found guilty, and sentenced to be fined £200 and to be imprisoned for four

years.[1] This was in 1793. In the following year Horne Tooke and several other persons were prosecuted for high treason, substantially on the ground that they belonged to a society for obtaining Parliamentary reform; but juries could not be got to find them guilty.

Other methods of coercion were then adopted, placing the right of public meeting, and even the right to open reading-rooms and circulating libraries, under magisterial control; while the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act from 1794 to 1800 enabled the Government to imprison its critics for any length of time without a trial, and to treat them, "when in confinement, with shameful severity."[2] "The stamp and advertisement duties were increased; more stringent provisions made against unstamped publications; and securities taken for ensuring the responsibility of printers."[3] "Printers and booksellers all over the country were hunted out for prosecution."[4] In order to procure evidence against the reformers, "society was everywhere infested with espionage";[5] a watch being set even on the metaphysical conversations of Coleridge and Wordsworth.

In Scotland the policy of repression was exercised with much greater severity, four persons being sentenced to fourteen years', and a fifth to seven years', transportation, because they had agitated for Parliamentary reform. Pitt gave it as his opinion that the judges would have been highly culpable

[1] Adolphus, *History of England,* vol. v., pp. 528–9.
[2] Buckle, *History of Civilisation in England,* vol. i., p. 449 (2nd ed.).
[3] May, *Constitutional History of England,* vol. ii., p. 172.
[4] Buckle, p. 447.
[5] May, p. 289.

had they shown more lenity to the prisoners, and the House of Commons approved of their conduct by an enormous majority.

At this time the men who ruled England seem to have become animated by an actual love of slavery as such. This is no metaphor, no exaggeration. Begun in 1787, the movement for abolishing the slave-trade had gained the approval of George III.; the question was brought before Parliament at the suggestion of Pitt, who powerfully supported abolition, and resolutions in its favour were passed by a unanimous vote in 1789. But in the spring of 1791 it was rejected in the House of Commons by a majority of two to one, and by the end of the year "the King had become strongly opposed to a measure which would be approved by the Jacobins. His opposition made it impossible that the question should be taken up by the Ministry."[1] Besides the unfortunate fact that the Jacobins disapproved of the slave-trade, a negro insurrection in San Domingo helped to complicate the situation. Any reasonable human being would have looked on this incident as an additional argument against a system that went to increase the servile population of the West Indies; and it was accordingly pressed in that sense by Wilberforce. The general effect, however, was to "cool public feeling on the subject, and Pitt's zeal manifestly declined."[2] His colleagues, Dundas, Thurlow, and Jenkinson, showed zeal enough—but it was zeal for the trade; and in the House of Lords the Duke of Clarence, afterwards William IV., stood foremost

[1] *Dictionary of National Biography,* vol. lxi., p. 211.
[2] Lecky, vol. v., p. 341.

among those who fought against its abolition. The usual arguments urged for the continuance of man-stealing were regard for the commercial prosperity of England, and that other nations would take up the trade if we abandoned it. To which Fox replied that no gain would justify such a crime, and that highway robbery might be defended on the same plea. For their final victory the abolitionists were indebted to him, although it was not won till after his death. It might have been indefinitely postponed had Pitt lived ; and, as it was, the trade more than doubled under his administration.

It is the chief glory of Pitt's life that he was most unwilling to engage in a war with revolutionary France, and only entered on it under compulsion. How that compulsion ultimately took effect still remains a controverted question—whether it came more from the reactionary fanatics of England, or from the regicidal fanatics of the Convention; or from neither of these, but from a blindly disastrous combination of circumstances. But it is beyond doubt that the first provocation came from Burke ; that Burke wished for war long before it was declared, and that, once begun, he wished it to be carried on until the Republic was destroyed. And it is equally certain that Pitt, when he consented to fight, fought, at least ostensibly, against what he called Jacobinism in the same spirit of implacable hostility as Burke, one of his ablest colleagues, Windham, holding that the restoration of the Bourbons was the object of the war.[1]

[1] *Dictionary of National Biography,* vol. lxii., p. 174.

An Irish rebellion, provoked by the incompetence and mismanagement of the English oligarchy, occurred in 1798, and was put down with a severity accompanied by every circumstance of undiscriminating atrocity. True, these horrors were inflicted on Irish victims by Irish ruffians; but they were condoned by Pitt and the King. Lord Moira brought the matter twice before the House of Lords. "The Government refused to credit his account, or to interfere with the measures taken by the Irish Ministers to suppress the rebellion."[1] Two years later the very limited amount of self-government that Ireland possessed was taken from her by the lavish use of corruption, coupled with a promise of Catholic emancipation, which was not fulfilled.

Thus England, after taking rank fifty years before as the most glorious representative of European liberty, seemed at the end of the eighteenth century to have become its most determined foe, at home and abroad, in its highest developments and in its most elementary forms, lending to the cause of its oppression what had begun as the most potent instruments of its maintenance and extension—the supreme eloquence of Burke and the supreme energy of Pitt.

Immunity from resistance or criticism, concentration of all the national resources under one hand, and command of unprecedented wealth, had not created military power, nor given our aristocracy victory in the field. Warfare by subsidised coalitions did as

[1] *The Political History of England,* 1760–1800, p. 406.

little for the destruction of the enemy abroad as government by the corrupt management of competing interests did for the instruction of the people at home. Prussia took Pitt's money, and deserted him to secure her share in the partitionment of Poland. Austria took it, and fought his battles without success, until the more substantial bribe of Venetia reconciled her to an ignominious peace. As to the English troops, it is enough to say that they were placed under the command of the Duke of York, an utterly incapable general, for no better reason than that he was the King's son. When at last Pitt insisted on his supersession, George III. declared himself "very much hurt."[1] We shall see later on what sort of figure His Royal Highness made as Commander-in-Chief.

An abler commander than the Duke could perhaps not have done much better with the materials at his disposal. The officers were uneducated and the men undisciplined. It is remarkable that the only two generals who much distinguished themselves during the first French War—Sir Ralph Abercrombie and Sir John Moore—were both Scotchmen and both trained abroad. They divide the glory of having restored the old traditions of the British army and prepared the way for its Peninsular triumphs.

During the same period five great victories at sea carried England's naval reputation to the highest pitch it had yet reached, rivalling the glories of the French army, and showing Nelson

[1] *Political History, ut supra,* p. 362.

as the first sailor even more indisputably than Napoleon is the first soldier in history. Naval warfare, perhaps more than any other field, offers an opportunity for the exercise of that individuality which English liberty has done so much to develop, and of which Nelson is a supreme example. Nor was liberty alone the secret of our victories. The same democratic principle that made her rival so successful by land made England equally successful by sea—the principle of *la carrière ouverte aux talens*. Of our naval heroes Howe alone was nobly born ; the Hoods and Jervis were middle-class men ; Nelson, Collingwood, and Duncan came of good but untitled families, English or Scotch. The hardships of a sea life acted as a tolerably effective barrier in keeping out the idle, luxurious, and brainless young gentlemen by whom the other services used to be infested. But the Admiralty was in aristocratic hands, and its maladministration provoked a mutiny in the fleet which, occurring at a critical moment, put the existence of the Empire in peril.

Those years of oppression and military disaster were signalised by an extraordinary revival of British literature and science. Since the close of the American War very few books of permanent value had been written by Englishmen ; and those who wrote what is still held to be worth reading were rather the survivors of an old than the inaugurators of a new time. "Poetry," as Macaulay observes, "had fallen into such utter decay that Hayley was thought a great poet." In fiction Fanny Burney passed for a prodigy.

English science was almost concentrated in Priestley, and was almost wrecked in the destruction of his books and apparatus by a Church-and-King mob. English philosophy, what little there was of it, lay buried in the manuscripts of Bentham. The Revolution seemed at first sight likely to increase this alienation from imaginative and speculative interests, in its commencement by offering the spectacle of a drama with which no fiction could compete, and in its later developments as the cause of agonising terrors for what so great a portent might bring forth. Only when those early hopes were dashed and those premature alarms appeased did the stimulus begin to take effect, and the energies that found no practical outlet begin to be turned into the channels of ideal emotion.

All the chief animating tendencies of what was to be the new literature had been at work long before 1789. A revived romanticism, noticed with alarm by Shaftesbury, had already begun under Queen Anne. There was genuine observation of nature in Thomson, enthusiasm for Greece in Collins, sense of reality in Cowper; all these together, combined with a new curiosity about Northern sagas, in Gray. The fertile *motif* of foreign travel had been successfully cultivated by Goldsmith. Yet these velleities of innovation, after a more or less prolonged struggle, had succumbed to the tyranny of convention ; and even in Cowper, or rather most of all in Cowper, the didactic had reasserted its sway.

Sympathy with American freedom did something to loosen the conventional yoke, but only the French Revolution could finally break it. The

first tendency to profit by the release was Romanticism. In this instance, however, the French influence was not unmixed ; republican ideas associated themselves more readily with Hellenic than with mediæval traditions. But it so happened that the first revelation of German literature came to England simultaneously with the first enthusiasm for France's political regeneration. At that time Unitarians either took the lead or followed closely on every new departure. William Taylor, of Norwich, who belonged to a Unitarian set, was the first Englishman to make a systematic study of German poetry, while also making himself prominent in the proceedings of the Revolutionary Society, a mildly Jacobin body. His translation of Bürger's *Lenore* (1790) first fully awoke the genius of Scott. Another young Englishman, Matthew Lewis, after learning German at seventeen, visited Weimar and was introduced to Goethe in 1792. Two years later he read Schiller's *Robbers,* and wrote a romantic story called *The Monk.* Visiting Edinburgh in 1798, he met Scott, encouraged him to translate from the German, and found him a publisher. Lewis himself had been stimulated by Ann Radcliffe's romance, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). Both this and its successor, *The Italian,* won enormous popularity, and bear witness to the sudden revolution in taste. Blake's *Poetic Sketches*, published in 1783, are deeply penetrated with the romantic spirit ; but their complete failure at the time shows how much the Revolution had to do with their ultimate success. Blake himself sympathised ardently with the Revolution, and his best poetic work, the

Songs of Experience, was evidently produced under its inspiration.

If by romanticism we are to understand the excitement of emotion by the imaginative presentation of extraordinary events, more particularly those of a really or apparently supernatural character, then unquestionably the chief, or rather the only, great poet of the school at its first beginning was Coleridge. On him the action of the French Revolution was intense, while the influence of German literature, as poetry, seems to have counted for nothing; for, though he read and admired Schiller's *Robbers* in an English translation, it can hardly have left a trace on the development of his genius. When he visited Germany it was to study not literature, but philosophy; and his most vital work in poetry was done before he went there, *The Ancient Mariner, Christabel,* and *Kubla Khan* having all been written in 1797. It may be noticed also in this connection that the first literary result of Coleridge's residence in Germany, his translation of Schiller's *Wallenstein,* had no success with the English public until several years later, no doubt because its classic form seemed out of keeping with the prevalent romantic taste.

Wordsworth and Coleridge were at first closely united by mutual admiration, by a common enthusiasm for the Revolution, by common studies in philosophy, and by a common dislike for the school of Pope; moreover, their association in the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* gave an impression that they represented a common literary movement. This, however, was a mistake; and, in fact, their

poetic methods were widely different. Realism is not romance, and Wordsworth was a realist. He took up and carried to a much higher power the naturalist current of eighteenth-century poetry; that is, the direct representation of elementary feeling, and of the scenes where such feeling is most freely displayed, depicted by preference under their most enduring aspects. And for this choice of subject and method French influence is to be thanked. The Revolutionists had sought to carry Rousseau's gospel of nature into effect; and when their aspirations were or seemed to be defeated, nature remained as an ideal refuge until the return of better times.

By a remarkable coincidence, the year 1797, which saw the publication of Ann Radcliffe's second great romance, *The Italian,* saw also the completion of Jane Austen's masterpiece, *Pride and Prejudice,* swiftly followed by *Sense and Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey,* although not one of the three appeared in print until several years later. Of these novels the last-named is a direct protest against romanticism; and the same animus is present, although slightly veiled, in the second also. All three are reproductions, so far as they go, of actual contemporary life. No one would accuse Miss Austen of being a revolutionist; yet without the Revolution I question whether these novels would have been written. Her style is correct and temperate, but also to an extraordinary degree curt, direct, and trenchant. The epithets "exquisite" and "delicate" have been consecrated to her service with a stupid monotony which seems to show that the critics have failed to

recognise what is still more characteristic—her energy and decision. The word of command from the lips of a Nelson or an Arthur Wellesley could not be more peremptory or to the point. She breathes the air of a new time, demanding the swiftest resolutions in council, the most unwearied fortitude in execution. There is energy enough in the imperious self-assertion of Elizabeth Bennet and the headlong passion of Marianne Dashwood to furnish out a hundred heroines of later English fiction. And, with all Miss Austen's contempt for the vulgar *bourgeoisie,* there is something in the victory of Elizabeth over Darcy, as long afterwards in the victory of Fanny Price over the Crawfords and Bertrams, suggesting the rise of a new power before which the aristocracy of birth was destined to succumb.

Maria Edgeworth belongs to the same period as Jane Austen, and, like her, represents an intenser development of the earlier realism entering into rivalry with romance, illustrated by the same qualities of energy and decision in style. Her name has become identified with a didactic tendency characteristic of the whole century that gave her birth. But that tendency had also been powerfully stimulated by the Revolution, and is found mingling strangely with the visionary raptures of Blake and Coleridge no less than with the philosophic reveries of Wordsworth. One of the *Songs of Experience* is about a little sweep; *The Ancient Mariner* is a protest against field sports, *Peter Bell* a plea for humanity to the most despised and ill-treated of domesticated animals. Such teachings have obviously democratic affinities; and, as if to

point the contrast with aristocratic fashions, Windham, the model of an English gentleman, defended bull-baiting in Parliament.

The period from the Revolution to the Peace of Amiens is no less rich in scientific than in literary promise. Those years saw the first public appearance of Dalton, who constituted meteorology as a science, and to whom we owe the theory of atomic equivalents which is the basis of modern chemistry; of Davy, who analysed the alkalis into their elements, and proved by experiment the dynamic nature of heat; of Young, who discovered the phenomenon of optical interference, thereby placing the undulatory theory of light on an experimental basis; of William Smith, who founded stratigraphy by his laborious geological survey of England and Wales, and fixed its method by using the fossils found in rocks as a means of determining their relative antiquity. It was also in the middle of this period (1794–6) that Erasmus Darwin published his *Zoonomia,* in which Lamarck's theory of organic evolution is anticipated. Finally, the foundation of the Royal Institution, which gave Davy and Young an opportunity for expounding their great discoveries to popular audiences, falls in the year 1797.

It is to be observed that the English scientific work of the new age not only exceeds what had gone before it in amount, but also, and to a still greater extent, in quality. Cavendish and Priestley count only as discoverers of isolated facts, Priestley even remaining all his life obstinately wedded to a false chemical theory. Dalton, Davy, and Young were

as great theorists as they were experimentalists; Erasmus Darwin and William Smith gave science new methods of research.

The causes of this great and sudden expansion are more difficult to trace than the conditions of the literary revival which accompanied it. That it was connected with the Revolution seems highly probable, but in what way the connection came about is not obvious. It must be noted first of all that the leaders in the new science were without exception amateurs, and as such illustrate the characteristic individualism of the English intellect—an individualism likely to be still further accentuated in Dalton and Young by the fact of their being Quakers, and in Davy by his receiving lessons in science from a Quaker; and this independent character would be still further encouraged by the revolutionary environment. But why should so much of the newly-awakened energy discharge itself along the lines of physical investigation? I can only suggest that this happened because those ideal aspirations which the Revolution excited were debarred from seeking an outlet in political activity, partly by the conversion of the Revolution itself into a war of conquest and spoliation, partly by the repression of all reforming agitation in England under Pitt. It is noticeable, in this connection, that Macaulay has explained the analogous rise of English science after the Restoration by a diversion of energy from political to physical inquiries.

Another factor in the situation was the impoverishment of the country caused by Pitt's war-expenditure, diverting, as this did, large masses of capital from productive to unproductive

employment, besides imposing an oppressive load of taxation on the middle classes. Now, if it be true that an absorbing devotion to material interests was responsible for England's literary and scientific decline, it is at least possible that this subsequent depletion of wealth may have restored some of her best energies to the pursuit of more ideal ends.

At a time when France enjoyed undisputed supremacy in European science we might expect to find her influence at work in the revival of English science. But in this instance the French example does not seem to have counted for much. It is at least remarkable that the English were weakest where the French were relatively strongest —that is, in pure mathematics and biology. What we learned from them in these studies was learned at a much later period. Meanwhile America was, perhaps, more helpful. At any rate, it was Franklin's electrical discoveries that first roused Priestley's emulation ; and the Royal Institution was founded by an American, the brilliant and versatile Count Rumford.

In 1798 appeared the greatest single contribution to social science made since *The Wealth of Nations,* and one not surpassed in importance ever since. This was the famous *Essay on Population,* by Thomas Malthus, an English clergyman. Its origin is closely connected with the political circumstances of the time. As a consequence, presumably, of the distress caused by the American War, an amendment to the Poor Law, passed in 1782, and known as Gilbert's Act, "abolished the workhouse test and provided work for those who

were willing near their homes."[1] In 1796, at a period of much greater distress, the justices who had taken the place of the old Poor Law Guardians were "empowered to give relief to any industrious poor person at his own residence."[2] Thus it came to pass that "the labourers' wages were systematically made up out of the rates";[3] and as the allowance was increased in proportion to the number of children, not excluding bastards, a direct stimulus was given to the increase of the population, in perfect accordance with the apparent interests of the manufacturers and farmers, who wanted cheap labour, and of the Government, which wanted cheap food for powder, not to speak of the Tories, who wanted cheap philanthropy. Paley, the official moralist, held that happiness is equally diffused among all classes of society, and that its "quantity in any country is best measured by the number of the people."[4] Malthus was of a different opinion, while at the same time supporting Pitt's Poor Law Bill, whose ulterior consequences he seems not at first to have perceived. What ultimately seems to have suggested his destructive criticism of grants in aid of wages as a method for the relief of want was a searching examination of Godwin's *Political Justice*. It seemed to Malthus that the tendency of population to increase beyond the means of subsistence raised an impassable barrier to every scheme and every dream of social regeneration. Stated generally, his philosophy is that all the miseries afflicting society are so many expressions of the

[1] Toynbee, *The Industrial Revolution*, p. 103.
[2] H. de B. Gibbins, *Industry in England*, p. 412.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Moral Philosophy*, p. vii.

ultimate fatality which prevents the limited additions to human food from keeping pace with the indefinite multiplication of human mouths. In point of fact, population has not increased at anything like the rate that would have been attained under the most favourable conditions; but this, according to Malthus, is chiefly because disease, vice, war, and famine have combined to check its normal growth; the removal of every preventable evil would merely leave mankind face to face with famine as the one insuperable enemy, and famine would bring back every other evil in its train.

Malthus afterwards came to admit that the practice of prudential self-restraint might be so developed as to keep the number of human beings within the limits of a comfortable existence; and as Godwin assumed that in a rational state of society such restraint would be habitually practised, the difference between them almost disappeared. At any rate, the *Essay on Population* merely applied to a particular case what *Political Justice* made the principle of all progress—the substitution of conscious, rational prevision for blind and violent constraint.

Since Malthus wrote, his law has been extended to the whole organic world, and has been exhibited as the sole cause, or at least a prime cause, of organic evolution. But Malthus had already grasped the possibility of such an application within the limits of the human species. Without dreaming of any change in its fundamental constitution, he represents the pressure of population on the means of subsistence as a divinely appointed

instrument for the perpetual exercise and enhancement of man's industry and ingenuity. He failed to see that a result which would equally have come about in the absence of supernatural guidance leaves the case for theism no stronger than before. And, of course, he still more thoroughly failed to see that his principle would become the basis of a vast theory destined, in the opinion of some, to supersede theism altogether. Meanwhile the Essay told as a trenchant criticism on Pitt's Poor Law, and led to an immediate reconstruction of scientific economics.

The French Revolution had been prepared by a philosophy in which destructive criticism on theology played a great part; it had been conducted by professed unbelievers, who began by confiscating Church property and ended with a proscription of the priests who took their orders from Rome. In England Burke had denounced it as anti-religious and as quite alien from the essentially religious genius of the English people. He referred to the English Deists as long extinct, and to their writings as forgotten. It would have been more correct to say that Deism had not set up any organised effort to strip the Anglican Church of her temporalities; but this was rather the result of a tacit compromise with Rationalism than a sign of its defeat. Since Hume, freethought had been spreading among the higher intellects, and with some had doubled the area of its original negations. Gibbon, the greatest of modern historians, counted among the assailants of Christianity; Bentham and Erasmus Darwin were known in private to be atheists; Romilly and Mackintosh seem to have

been Deists; Fox had no religious beliefs, nor, as would appear, had Pitt either.[1] On the other hand, the Church of England, while remaining nominally orthodox, had in practice become a teacher of what amounted to little more than a purely ethical religion, insisting on no dogmas beyond a personal God and a future life as sanctions of morality. Meanwhile a number of Nonconformists, grouping themselves under the name of Unitarians, compromised more openly with Deism by renouncing the dogmas of Original Sin, the Incarnation, and the Atonement.

Against this movement for transforming religion into simple morality a double protest was raised—by Methodism outside the Church and by Evangelicalism within it. Evangelicalism had gained access to the highest political circles in the person of Wilberforce, but otherwise had little hold on the intellect of England.

It has been shown with what energy the revolutionary atmosphere acted on all the latent tendencies of English life and thought, quickening the sense of possibility on the one hand and the sense of actuality on the other. It could not, therefore, fail to rekindle the old conflict between the appeal to a supernatural revelation and the exclusive reliance on nature which had divided opinion half a century before.

The first to break silence on the Rationalist side was Thomas Paine. Part I. of his *Age of Reason* appeared in 1794; Part II., a work of much greater importance, in 1795. Paine's natural bent was

[1] J. M. Robertson, *A Short History of Freethought,* vol. ii., p. 177 (2nd ed.).

towards science; circumstances made him a democratic politician. He founded the alliance of Rationalism with science and democracy. Attracted at an early age by astronomy, he could not reconcile the very insignificant place in the universe occupied by our earth with the overwhelming importance ascribed to its human population by the scheme of salvation. But in rejecting that scheme as represented by the current Christianity he did not rely exclusively on the *a priori* arguments that astronomy suggests. Admitting the possibility of a divine revelation, he denies that any has been made to man beyond the structure of the universe itself. Part II. of the *Age of Reason* goes through the Bible with the object of showing that much of what it contains is inconsistent with the theory of its divine authorship. If Paine added nothing to what the English and French deists had said before him, he brought together the substance of their attacks on the Old and New Testament stories, and restated it in a clear, popular style. Much of what he said was afterwards practically conceded by Coleridge, and has since been more or less openly admitted by many who claim to be Christian believers.

Although originally intended for the French rather than for the English public, it was in England that the *Age of Reason* proved most successful; and an attempt was at once made to stop its circulation among the poorer classes, the shilling edition being suppressed while the half-crown edition remained unmolested. For selling one copy a bookseller named Williams was prosecuted and sentenced to a year's imprisonment

(1797). But this seems to have been an isolated case ; nor did persecution for propagating unbelief at that time rage with anything like the virulence displayed a quarter of a century later.

Paley's *Evidences of Christianity,* long the official text-book of orthodox apologetics, appeared in the same year as Paine's attack, but without reference to it. The main positions defended are : That miracles are not antecedently incredible to anyone who believes that the world was created by a personal Being ; that Christianity could not have been introduced into the world without a display of divine authority involving some departure from the usual course of nature ; that such a departure was justified by the end in view ; that miracles performed for that purpose are recorded and abundantly attested in early Christian literature ; that the authenticity of the books containing their evidence is certain ; and that the credibility of the witnesses is established by their willingness to undergo cruel torment rather than renounce their belief, as also by their acceptance of a severe morality on the strength of the Gospel promises.

In the present state of criticism it is clear to all, and it must have been clear to many in his own day, that Paley's case rests on a series of assumptions inconsistent with religious psychology and with the results of New Testament criticism. But his steady reliance on pure reason as distinguished from the methods of authority and mysticism, his clear-headedness and dialectical ability, furnish one more instance of the increased intellectual seriousness which the French Revolution had communicated to the English genius. And the need for

such a defence shows how pressing the attack had become.

Paley's *Evidences* sought to show that the Christian religion was a supernatural revelation. A few years later Wilberforce, in his *Practical View of Christianity,* achieved something much greater: he showed what that religion actually was. It is not, according to him, what the eighteenth century vainly imagined, an ethical code armed with new sanctions; but, first of all, an explanation of the fact, universally recognised as such by everyone who has eyes to see, that man is by nature and fatal heredity an utterly corrupt creature, alienated from his Creator, and justly subject to awful penalties for that original apostasy. The Christian revelation tells us that from that lost condition there is one way of escape, and one alone. It has been furnished by the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who vicariously took upon himself the punishment due to our sins, and whose satisfaction we may henceforth plead, if we accept it, in discharge of our liabilities before God. Without that plea the austerest virtue cannot save us; but the austerest virtue is felt as a life-long obligation by him who has accepted the transfer of his sin and its consequences to the Redeemer. God must reign without a rival in the thoughts and affections of the true believer; and on one day of the week he must think of nothing but God.

This conception of human life as the prelude to man's eternal existence under the form of a disembodied spirit, and interesting only by reference to another disembodied spirit eternally distinct from the world, was the very essence of the religious

movement begun two generations before by William Law and John Wesley, and remodelled a generation later by Keble and Newman. It is the form given by minds of a certain constitution in a certain stage of culture to the claim that disinterested, ideal ends shall be made paramount over the selfish, frivolous, and fleeting satisfactions of a merely animal existence. To realise those obligations under concrete personal forms gives them at first an extraordinary grip on the affections and the will, but eventually compromises and corrupts their idealism by union with a perishable body of class-interests and unwarrantable beliefs, frequently degenerating into abject superstition. Wilberforce and his co-religionists led the agitation for the abolition of the slave trade and slavery, which, however, would neither have begun nor have succeeded without the co-operation of men who stood at the opposite pole of thought. But they were out of sympathy with the scientific and literary glories of the age; their religious scruples long hindered the advent of popular education, and their credulous conservatism made them the natural enemies of all reforms directed towards benefiting the people with the aid of the people itself.

Chapter III.

THE EPIC OF NATIONS

The war between England and Napoleon from 1803 to 1814–15 is generally regarded by historians as a simple continuation of the war between England and the French Republic from 1793 to 1802. And this much is true, that the personal hostility of Napoleon to England, as the chief obstacle to his design of creating a world-empire, had already begun to show itself when, as General Bonaparte, he led a French expedition to Egypt with the object of making it a stepping-stone to the conquest of India. But, apart from what the necessities of self-defence demanded of her, the attitude and intention of England in the second war differed widely from what they had been in the first. She had then appeared as the champion of order against license; she now appeared as the champion of liberty against oppression; while, conversely, the sword of France was transferred from the cause of emancipation to the cause of spoliation and enslavement. On France's side, indeed, the change had been long in progress, and the Republic must share the responsibility for it with the Empire. Coleridge's great *Ode to France* lives as an immortal record both of her shameless aggression on Switzerland and of its effect in alienating the sympathies of some that even the Terror had left unshaken supporters of her

democracy. But England as a State had never pretended to fight for Switzerland any more than for Venice; and the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy continued to be the avowed object of her rulers until the haughty rebuff of the First Consul brought them to their senses. The second war, on the other hand, though nominally engaged on the question of our retention of Malta, was really provoked by new French aggressions on Holland and Switzerland. From the beginning England's own independence had been at stake; in five years the war became a struggle for the deliverance of the Iberian Peninsula, in which the Portuguese and Spanish peoples fought on our side; the Tyrolese were next enlisted in the same cause; then came the heroic resistance of the Russian people; and, finally, the whole German nation rose in arms against the tyranny of Napoleon.

English public opinion could not fail to be affected by so vast a transformation of the questions at issue. During a war avowedly waged for the restoration of liberty, the friends of liberty could no longer be denounced as Jacobins; and, although there was still wide disagreement about our Continental relations, the dividing line ran more on policy than on principle. It became the fashion in Whig circles to throw doubt on the regeneration of the Spanish people—as subsequently appeared, not without good reason—and to predict the eventual failure of our arms in the Peninsula—as, had it not been for Napoleon's incalculable Moscow campaign, they would, in fact, have failed. But no party wished the French to win, or regarded their victories as other than defeats for freedom. Even

before the Spanish rising William Cobbett, the most popular of Radical journalists, denounced Napoleon as a military despot, and ardently advocated the continuance of the war until his empire should have been shorn of those maritime conquests which made it a perpetual menace to the independence of England. And he also had the highest hopes of our ultimate success, if English arms were brought into alliance with the popular revolt against French oppression.

The change of opinion brought about by this altered aspect of foreign politics could not fail to react on the balance of parties at home. The coalition of the majority of the Whigs with Pitt, the acceptance of a royal pension by Burke, and the secession of Fox from Parliament had marked the lowest depth to which Liberalism ever sank in modern England; while the final destruction of Irish autonomy a little later had completed the triumph of reaction. A few years afterwards Pitt himself was making overtures to Fox which, had they been successful, would have resulted in giving his great rival an equal share of power. Owing to the King's dislike of Fox the negotiations fell through; but on Pitt's death even George III.'s obstinacy had to give way, and the Whigs returned to power for the first time since 1783, their brief predominance being signalised by the abolition of the slave trade, which had been impossible so long as Pitt lived. On two subsequent occasions they might have secured a considerable share of office under the Prince Regent had not the demands of their leaders been pitched too high.

It has been already mentioned that Pitt carried

the Union with Ireland partly by an informal promise to the Irish people that the law excluding Roman Catholics from Parliament should be repealed. We cannot doubt his sincerity, but he had reckoned without the King. The Archbishops of Canterbury and Armagh got hold of the royal ear and persuaded George III. that for him to agree to such a measure would involve the violation of his coronation oath and the forfeiture of his Crown. Finding that his master's scruples could not be overcome, the great Minister honourably resigned, and Addington, an incompetent favourite, was installed in his place. Never since the accession of the Hanoverian dynasty had the power of the Crown been so signally or so disastrously exercised. And, as a further aggravation of its absurdity, at this very crisis the King was overtaken by one of those fits of insanity the very liability to which would have permanently excluded him from any inferior office of authority. It operated in this instance to strengthen his position. By threatening to go mad if Catholic Emancipation were ever again mentioned to him George III. succeeded in exacting a pledge from Pitt and all Pitt's successors that silence should be kept on so irritating a subject.

As parties grew more evenly balanced the power of the Crown became more and more a decisive factor in the situation, those who yielded to the royal will naturally having the advantage of those who defied it. But the Tories who were King's men ultimately had to pay dear for their degrading subservience, as indeed also had the Crown itself by the loss of all its authority. On the other hand, the new exercise of prerogative proved the salvation

of the Whigs. By refusing to take the King's pledge they acquired an unwonted dignity, and even a certain moral splendour. The old charge of greed for office could no longer be urged against men who sacrificed office to a scrupulous regard for honour, peace, justice, and toleration. The charge of aristocratic exclusiveness fell pointless against the champions of a despised and down-trodden race. The charge of adhering to anti-quated shibboleths seemed ridiculous as against the generous orators whose programme was so enlarged as to include respect for a religion their ancestors had long proscribed. The charge of truckling to popular clamour grew ever more irrelevant as the mob came to side with the King, whose prejudices they shared.

Nor was this all. If the Whigs won by taking up Emancipation, their enemies lost to an even greater degree by not accepting it. The Crown became a symbol of unpatriotic obstinacy and folly. Nearly all the Whig leaders who had allied themselves with Pitt in 1794—Grenville, Fitz-william, Spencer, and Windham—accepted the Catholic claims and returned to their old allegiance. Some of the ablest Tories—Canning, Castlereagh, the Marquess Wellesley—while remaining within the party, sided on that question with their political opponents, and thus formed a continual source of embarrassment to their associates, terminating in open disruption when the Protestant leaders them-selves accepted Emancipation—a catastrophe by which the power of the Crown was finally destroyed. Meanwhile, the Catholic gentlemen of Ireland were driven into the arms of the Irish people, thus

helping to create a new difficulty for the English aristocracy and a new link between the cause of suffering nationalities and the cause of European liberty.

Although resumed under far different auspices, the war with France long did as little to overthrow the new despotism as had been done in the previous decade to overthrow the new democracy. Even where they were not directly pitted against individual genius, our incapable oligarchy continued to pile up disaster and debt. An expedition to Buenos Ayres was placed by Court influence under the command of General Whitelocke, whom a court-martial subsequently declared "unfit to serve his Majesty in any military capacity whatever."[1] It terminated in the defeat and capitulation of a strong British force. A far more important expedition to the Low Countries was ruined by being placed under the command of a royal favourite, Lord Chatham, whose incompetence did not escape even his own brother, Pitt. Expeditions against Constantinople and Alexandria came to an equally ignominious end. Finally, a war with the United States, for which the lawless arrogance of our rulers is chiefly responsible, was signalised by the defeat of General Packenham at New Orleans, with the loss of 3,000 Peninsular veterans.

It must not be supposed that our naval was much better than our military administration. After Nelson by his individual genius had annihilated France's sea power, French privateers continued to infest the English coast and to capture

[1] *Political History of England* (1800–1837), p. 57.

English vessels in full sight of English men-of-war.[1] During the American War the conflict at sea was generally carried on by duels between frigates, in which the Americans were most frequently victorious. This was due to no deficiency in seamanship or gallantry on our side, but to the fact that our champions were invariably over-matched, being ignorantly allowed to engage what, although called frigates, were almost equal to ships of the line. And that such ignorance prevailed was due to the intelligence department—if it deserves that name—of the English Admiralty. For, shortly before hostilities began, one of these so-called frigates had anchored at Spithead, and offered an opportunity for estimating her fighting strength as compared with our own frigates, which opportunity was utterly neglected.[2]

When the hour of victory arrived the same military mismanagement contrived to throw its fruits away. Fortune placed at the disposal of the oligarchy a young general, sprung from their own ranks, gifted, for a wonder, with military genius, and, by a greater wonder still, with the genius for making the most of it by assiduous cultivation. Arthur Wellesley, although of noble birth, was saved from the usual temptations of his order by a fortunate poverty which caused him to be removed at an early age from Eton to a French academy, and which, when his school days were over, obliged him to work for his living. Aristocratic connections gave him the one thing he had to thank them for—early and rapid promotion. India practised him in

[1] *The Croker Papers,* vol. i., p. 33. [2] *Ibid,* p. 45.

the exercise of command. The best humanitarian traditions of the eighteenth century acting on a naturally kind heart imbued him with a habitual, and, as it happened, most politic consideration for the sufferings and susceptibilities of alien and helpless races.

In 1808 an opportunity offered itself to the English Government for employing this young hero in Europe. Castlereagh, at that time War Minister, gave Sir Arthur Wellesley the command of a small expedition sent to deliver Portugal from a French invasion. A few weeks after disembarking his troops at Lisbon, he defeated Marshal Junot in the decisive battle of Vimiero, only to find the fruits of victory torn from his grasp by an incompetent favourite of the Horse Guards. Castlereagh had persuaded his colleagues to raise the strength of the expedition from ten to thirty thousand men, but his efforts to place the enlarged force under Wellesley's command were baffled by the King.[1] No sooner had the victor of Assaye set sail than "two senior officers of no special ability;"[2] Sir Harry Burrard and Sir Hew Dalrymple, were placed over his head. Burrard arrived on the field of Vimiero at the moment when Sir Arthur was about to launch his reserves on the retreating French columns, just in time to assume the command and to forbid the pursuit, which would probably have ended in the unconditional surrender of Junot's whole army. As it was, on the very next morning Dalrymple, who in his turn had superseded Burrard, received proposals for a

[1] Lord Holland, *Further Memoirs of the Whig Party*, p. 15.
[2] *The Cambridge Modern History*, vol. ix., p. 440.

capitulation from Junot. But by this time the French had occupied a position of such strength that, so far from surrendering, they were able to insist on being conveyed to their country by English ships, taking with them all the plunder they had amassed, and with a guarantee of immunity to the Portuguese traitors who had abetted their designs.

The Convention of Cintra, as it was called, aroused a storm of indignation in England, and the generals were put on their trial. On examination by a court of inquiry they were honourably acquitted; but Burrard and Dalrymple were not again employed, whereas Wellesley received the sole command of another expedition to Portugal in the following year. It is said that the Duke of York, undeterred by his disastrous experience in Flanders, had intended to claim that position for himself, and that his purpose was only defeated by certain scandalous disclosures so opportunely sprung on the public as to suggest a suspicion that the somewhat ignoble personage who brought them before Parliament, one Colonel Wardle, was really acting on behalf of the War Office, whose responsible heads had no other means of keeping the Duke at home.[1] At any rate, it appeared that the mistress of the Commander-in-Chief, an actress named Mrs. Clarke, gave out that her royal lover allowed himself to be guided by her recommendations in the choice of officers for promotion, and that, on the strength of this alleged favour, she had opened an office for the private sale of commissions. That such transactions did take place there could

[1] This is hinted by Lord Holland, *Further Memoirs of the Whig Party*, p. 16.

be no doubt; the only question was whether the Duke had a guilty knowledge of them or not. The most plausible theory seems to be that he was innocent, but that, being a very loquacious person, he let Mrs. Clarke into the secret of his intention to bestow free commissions on certain deserving candidates, and that she profited by the information to levy toll on them under the pretence that the promotion which would anyhow have been theirs had been obtained by her interest.[1] On any view the affair was a scandalous one, and the Duke, though acquitted of connivance with his mistress's practices, had the decency to resign. His brother, the Prince Regent, subsequently restored him to the Command-in-Chief, an office which he otherwise filled very creditably; but by that time the supposed object of the Parliamentary attack had been gained, and, whatever else Sir Arthur Wellesley had reason to complain of, Court influence could no longer be turned against him. Nobody seems to have noticed in this affair that the objectionable thing was for commissions in the army to be sold by anyone to anyone on any terms.

None gave such eloquent expression to public feeling at this time as the poet Wordsworth, in a pamphlet on the Convention of Cintra. In a private letter the author of *The Prelude,* then not yet a "lost leader," prescribes two things as "absolutely necessary to the country—a thorough reform in Parliament and a new course of education."[2]

The new education of public opinion had already

[1] Kinglake, *Invasion of the Crimea,* vol. vii., pp. 418–19 (Cabinet ed.).

[2] Knight, *Life of Wordsworth,* vol. ii., p. 130.

begun years before Wordsworth wrote those lines —with little help or countenance, it must be owned, from the poet himself — under the form of a strenuous criticism on contemporary literature and life. The first collective impulse came from Edinburgh, with its brilliant University, its intellectual society, and its highly cultivated band of advocates. Among the forces making for culture and freedom in the northern capital, Dugald Stewart, Professor of Moral Philosophy since 1785, must be given the foremost place. As a thinker Stewart merely expounded Reid's shallow and reactionary metaphysics. But, as an educator and orator of the Chair, he exercised an unrivalled power of exciting noble enthusiasm among his young hearers. In society he was supported by a wife of surpassing charm and high intellectual interests, the "Ivy" of Lord Dudley's recently published letters. With the closing of the Continent it had become usual for English families of distinction to visit or even to reside at Edinburgh for pleasure or education; and, among others, the sons of great Whig magnates were sometimes sent to sit at the feet of a teacher who, even under Melville's reign of terror, had made no secret of his sympathy with the Revolution. Among his pupils were two future Prime Ministers, Russell and Palmerston, to whom must be added Lord Henry Petty (afterwards Lord Lansdowne), Ward (afterwards Earl Dudley), and Lord Webb Seymour. Some years later we find another future Whig Premier, William Lamb (afterwards Lord Melbourne), studying under Professor Millar at Glasgow.

From this fertilising contact between the English and Scottish intellects arose the *Edinburgh Review,* long the chief organ of Liberal opinion in Great Britain. The first idea of it was due to an Englishman, the great humorist Sydney Smith, who also edited the opening number, published in October, 1802; but much the greater mass of contributions came from Scotch lawyers, among whom Jeffrey, Horner, and Brougham stood foremost for ability and power. In after years also the only articles of permanent literary value, with the possible exception of Sir James Stephen's, were written by Carlyle and Sir William Hamilton, who were Scotchmen, or by Macaulay and Mill, whose fathers were Scotch.

Carlyle has described Jeffrey as the greatest of destructive critics. But this is a complete misrepresentation. Although holding rationalistic opinions, Jeffrey never attacked the reigning theology in print. Nor were his politics democratic, although he wished to reinforce existing institutions with a large popular element, advising the Whig aristocracy to seek support among the people. Unlike some other Whigs, he hated Napoleon; but, being of a desponding temperament, he opposed the Spanish policy of the Government—which, after all, only succeeded by a happy chance— a step which led to the severance of Walter Scott from the *Edinburgh Review,* and the transference of his support to the *Quarterly Review,* founded in 1809 as the chief organ of the reactionary principle in politics and literature.

On the whole, we may say that the principles of the *Edinburgh,* as guided by Jeffrey, coincided

with the central line of English political progress for the next two generations after its birth; but to maintain the movement in that line forces of a more radical direction had to lend their aid.

At that time the chief Parliamentary representative of the Reform party in England was Sir Francis Burdett, and its chief literary representative was William Cobbett. Each in his way did good work, but it was critical rather than constructive. The real founder of English philosophical Radicalism was a Scotchman, James Mill. This remarkable thinker, according to George Grote the greatest intellect that he had ever encountered, owed his enthusiasm for philosophy to Dugald Stewart, and perhaps his enthusiasm for liberty also. At any rate, he came up to London in 1802 a confirmed Liberal, though no Jacobin. His intimacy with Bentham begins not later than 1808. During the Revolution Bentham had been a high Tory. In 1809 we find him writing a Catechism for Reformers, in which universal suffrage is advocated. The dates suggest that he had been converted by Mill.[1] At any rate, Mill is henceforward the centre of what has come to be known as the Benthamite school. Dumont had first revealed Bentham to England and to all Europe by his French version of the *Theory of Legislation,* published in 1802. James Mill allied Utilitarianism with the political economy of Malthus and Ricardo, with the associationist psychology of Hartley, with a renewed study of Greek ideas, and with a comprehensive educational system, embracing all these as

[1] Elie Halévy, *Le Radicalisme Philosophique,* vol. ii., p. 196.

its elements, of which his illustrious son offers, so far, the only complete example. It is probable, as I have said, that he also allied Utilitarianism with democracy. Under his guidance the school adopted that extreme view, long supported by English Radicalism, for which the moderate Whig Reform Bill was finally substituted as a working compromise, with James Mill's complete approval. But this belongs to a period at which we have not yet arrived.

What best proves the growing liberality of the Napoleonic period is the spread of education among all classes and the lively interest shown in competing schemes for the education of the people. J. W. Ward, Dugald Stewart's pupil, who took his B.A. at Oxford in 1802, on revisiting the University in 1812 finds to his astonishment that during those ten years it has been transformed into a place of education. Examinations have ceased to be a matter of form; rioting and drunkenness are quite exceptional; idleness is discreditable, and reading the correct thing.[1] Writing between three and four years later, Coleridge contrasts the steady and serious tone of both Oxford and Cambridge with what it had been thirty years before, mentioning particularly "the zest in the pursuit of knowledge and academic distinction in a large and increasing number,"[2] associating it as part of a more general movement with "predominant anxiety concerning the education and principles of their

[1] Ward, *Letters to Ivy*, p. 182.

[2] Coleridge, *Church and State*, pp. 354–55 (ed. of 1839).

children in all the respectable classes of the community." Godwin, with ideals very unlike Coleridge's, observes, writing to Shelley in 1812, that between then and twenty years before the alteration in the men of these islands and of Europe was immense, greater progress having been made during that interval "than in any hundred years preceding."[1] And Jeffrey, no optimist, writing in 1809, tells the readers of the *Edinburgh* that "the people are, upon the whole, both more moral and more intelligent than they ever were in any former period."[2] In a word, from the time that we ceased to assail the French Revolution—and even a little before—its true principles began to spread and thrive among us.

Among the higher and middle classes the new demand for education was met to a considerable extent by existing endowments and by voluntary efforts. The demand for primary education had to struggle not only against the want of endowments, but also against the undisguised hostility of some among the well-to-do. "If there was any principle reverenced as indisputable by almost the whole adherents of the party in power," even little more than a century ago, "it was that the ignorance of the people was necessary for their obedience to the law."[3] Accordingly, even an unsuccessful attempt to do away with that ignorance by legislation must be noted as a sign of the times. Under Grenville's Ministry (1807) Whitbread, a prominent Whig, brought in a Bill providing free education for the

[1] Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, vol. ii., p. 107.
[2] Jeffrey, *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review*, vol. iv., p. 129.
[3] Cockburn, *Life of Lord Jeffrey*, vol. i., pp. 67-68.

poor in every parish throughout England. After passing the Commons against Windham's passionate opposition, probably in the assurance that it would be rejected by the Lords,[1] it was duly rejected, three Bishops voting for the Bill and fifteen against it. Archbishop Manners Sutton objected to Whitbread's plan that it would take education from the control of the Establishment—in his opinion a most dangerous innovation.[2]

Meanwhile private enterprise was supplying the place of State action. Several years earlier Andrew Bell, an East Indian army chaplain, had struck out a system of mutual instruction in schools, known afterwards from the place of its origin as the Madras method. The same idea occurred independently to Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker schoolmaster in London, who put it in practice on a large scale, carrying on an active propaganda for the system in all parts of the kingdom, and securing the support of sundry royal and noble patrons. With their aid he founded in 1809 the Royal Lancastrian Institution, a name afterwards changed to the British and Foreign School Society. Lancaster was a very religious man, but his plan was to teach religion simply by reading the Bible. Church people objected to this as tending to undermine the Establishment. Their attacks on Lancaster stirred up Bell to start a rival agitation for placing elementary teaching under the control of the Church. His efforts led to the foundation of the National Society in 1811. Between the two systems a bitter feud

[1] Romilly, *Memoirs,* vol. ii., p. 222.
[2] Clayton, *The Bishops and Legislation,* p. 59.

sprang up, and has continued down to the present day. The leading Whigs and the *Edinburgh Review* sided with Lancaster, the Tories and the *Quarterly* with Bell. Herbert Marsh, afterwards Bishop of Peterborough, for those times a wonderfully liberal Biblical critic, made himself remarkable for the energy he threw into the sectarian cause; and Coleridge, the most advanced theologian of the day, lost no opportunity for attacking Lancaster with ludicrous animosity.

As an instrument for imparting knowledge the Madras method eventually broke down; but the Bell and Lancaster schools gave an impulse to popular education that has never since died out; while the feud between the two systems has brought religious differences into a stimulating connection with party politics, and raised both into the sphere of high national interests.

In physical science the period of the second French war fulfilled to some extent the promises of the revolutionary epoch, but was less productive of original thought. England suffered intellectually by her long isolation from the Continent. None were found to develop Erasmus Darwin's evolutionary ideas. Young's undulatory theory of light was allowed to be crushed by Brougham's ignorant and insolent criticism of it in the *Edinburgh Review* (1803). The most important pioneer work was done by two Scotchmen, Dr. Thomas Brown and Sir Charles Bell. Brown, in his treatise *On Cause and Effect,* took up Hume's theory of causation and introduced the idea of invariable sequence into the philosophy of science. Bell in 1811, after

four years of investigation, announced the distinction between the sensory and motor nerves, and explained the nature of their connection with the spinal cord. It seems characteristic of the time that both achievements were rather analytic than synthetic and constructive, probing phenomena to the bottom, not exhibiting them in their systematic connection. Thus they fall into line with Davy's contemporary decomposition of the alkalis rather than with the great theories of Dalton, Young, and Erasmus Darwin.

As compared with the revolutionary period, literature also shows a distinct decline both in poetry and fiction. The French and German inspirations had spent much of their force. Romanticism still prevails, but declines on a more realistic plane of representation. As a part of this realism we find the popular poets of the age reflecting the new political situation created by the resistance to Napoleon's aggressive career. On the Tory side we have Scott's series of versified narratives, romantic indeed, but strictly subordinating the emotions of wonder, terror, and sexual passion, so freely employed by his predecessors, to the motives of picturesque historical association, of local colour, and of loyalty, whether under the form of national patriotism or of the intenser devotion given by a clansman to his chief. On the Whig side we have Byron's first two Cantos of *Childe Harold,* where a certain reluctant sympathy with the victims of French rapacity and with the English armies sent to deliver them struggles against a good Foxite's dominant detestation of all

war as such ; while the romantic use of horror and voluptuousness as imaginative excitements is not forgotten, and hollow eighteenth-century abstractions still crowd the scene. But in the portions giving the new poet's impressions of modern Greece reminiscence becomes prophecy ; the traditions of republican liberty and heroism derived from Harrow and Cambridge spring to life before the entrancing spectacles of Parnassus and Marathon, consecrating this young English nobleman to be the future augur and leader in the coming war of opinion where the spirit of nationality and the spirit of individual liberty, retrieving France's errors, were to combine their forces against the spirit of feudal and absolutist reaction.

Childe Harold was followed by a series of dazzling metrical romances in which the same sympathy with Greece and the same hatred for her Turkish oppressors ally themselves to a general spirit of revolt against cramping conventions. Byron's extravagant admiration for the great literary conventionalist, Pope, seems at first sight inconsistent with such an attitude. But it was merely another aspect of his pervading liberalism. By Pope Byron meant the classic tradition of English poetry, the side on which it represented republican liberty as against the reactionary romanticism of Coleridge, Southey, and Scott.

Byron's friend Moore contributed to the cause of nationalities by the publication of his *Irish Melodies* in 1807. As poetry they have little value, but the musical accompaniments to which their author sang them in Whig drawing-rooms gave the words and sentiments a certain social importance, and

combined with his versatile productivity, particularly as a biographer, to make him a power in the party.

Wordsworth continued a political Radical till the end of the war, supporting the various patriotic movements against Napoleon, but still an ardent admirer of Fox; still, as we have seen, a Parliamentary Reformer; still no Christian, but a Platonist in the *Ode on Immortality*; still a pantheist in the *Excursion* (1814); and, what is perhaps even more significant, in the same poem an advocate of universal education.

Maria Edgeworth, in the silence of Jane Austen, the greatest novelist of the period, obeys the same tendency by striking into the didactic vein which she never afterwards forsook. Her Benthamite morality, too, offers a silent but not unregarded protest against Evangelical mysticism.

It has often been observed that without the industrial revolution England could never have fought the war with Napoleon, still less come out victorious from the conflict with that almost superhuman genius. But, in fact, had it not been for the industrial revolution there would have been no war, or at least none on so vast a scale. The English colonisation of America, the English conquest of India, had been largely suggested by the hope of gain. Both had been disputed by France with the object of diverting that gain to herself. In both regions French ambition and enterprise succumbed before the genius of the elder Pitt. Twenty years later it was imagined that the loss of her North American colonies would involve the commercial ruin of the mother country;

and the object of her old rival in helping the insurgents was to hasten on that consummation, which the English Government on its side fought desperately to avert. Both were deceived. The defeated power gained enormously in wealth, while the victorious Bourbon monarchy paid by its own extinction for an act of treason against constituted authority, just as the New Monarchy in England perished by the reaction of that very Reformation whose success it had secured in order to destroy the last check on its despotism a century before.

French policy, however, survived the Bourbons, and even provided itself with a far more powerful instrument. When the first ferment of the Revolution had subsided the adventurer whom it raised to supreme eminence in the State at once took up the tradition of his predecessors and rushed to strike for India once more, this time taking the path of Alexander through Egypt and Syria. In the pursuit of that chimera he lost a fleet and an army, and nearly wrecked his own career; but, returning to France a fugitive, won her throne by a lucky throw, and sat down once more with full pockets to play the game of universal empire at a board where European kingdoms were counters, India and Asia remaining the stakes through it all. To defeat England's German and Russian allies in the field was the least of his difficulties, each military success counting but as a means towards the higher end of undermining her commercial position, each new invasion being determined by the fatal necessity for closing every Continental market to her trade. His tragic Peninsular and Russian expeditions were undertaken that the excluding cordon might

be extended without a break from Riga to Lisbon, and round again from Lisbon to Odessa.

In the battle between the French Revolution and oligarchy revolution had won. But in the battle between the industrial revolution and militarism industry won. It seemed as if England's material resources were multiplied by the very measures taken to destroy them. Napoleon's Continental system, originally adopted as a reply to the paper blockade of the coast from Brest to the Elbe, was in its turn met by an Order in Council "forbidding neutrals to trade between the ports of France and her allies, or between the ports of nations which should observe the Berlin decree, on pain of the confiscation of the ship and cargo."[1] Its effect was to throw the whole carrying trade into British hands. At the same time our immunity from invasion, combined with the relative insecurity of Continental industry, gave us a manufacturing monopoly. As a consequence of this privileged position the trade of the United Kingdom, measured by the sum of its exports and imports, was in 1815 exactly double what the trade of Great Britain had been in 1795.[2] "The value of taxable income from lands, houses, etc., was estimated at forty-five million pounds in 1798 and at sixty millions in 1815."[3] "The Census of 1801 showed an increase of eleven per cent., the Census of 1811 an increase of fourteen per cent., the Census of 1821 an increase of twenty-one per cent."[4] The tonnage of shipping belonging to Great Britain

[1] *The Political History of England* (1800–1837), p. 55.
[2] *Social England,* vol. v., p. 606.
[3] *Ibid,* p. 611.
[4] *Ibid,* p. 608.

and Ireland increased over sixty-two per cent. between 1793 and 1813.

But as the political revolution in France had greatly increased the power of the central Government, so the industrial revolution in England made the rich richer and the poor poorer. It was the capitalist manufacturers who gained by the increasing volume of trade, while the landholders gained both by agricultural improvements and by the rise in the price of corn. Wheat rose from 49s. 3d. per quarter in 1793 to 69s. in 1799, to 113s. 10d. in 1800, and 106s. in 1810.[1] This was partly due to legislation. "In 1791 a duty of 24s. 3d. was imposed as long as English wheat was less than 50s. a quarter; if English wheat was over 50s., the duty was 2s. 6d. In 1804 foreign corn was practically prohibited from importation if English wheat was less than 53s. a quarter; in 1815 the prohibition was extended till the price of English wheat was 80s. a quarter."[2]

Meanwhile the cost of paying for the war was thrown as much as possible on the poor, every necessity and convenience of daily life being taxed, and the incomes of capitalists and landowners not paying their fair share.[3] By the system of supplementing agricultural wages from the poor-rate the farmers were even enabled to throw part of the maintenance of labour on householders who often could ill afford it.

Strikes were penal. "The Act of 1800 was applied to all occupations, unions, or associations

[1] H. de B. Gibbins, p. 375.
[2] *Ibid,* pp. 434–35. [3] *Ibid,* p. 375.

of workmen for the purpose of obtaining an advance in wages or lessening the hours of work."[1]

This Act seems to have been passed without any debate. The penalty for violating its provisions was three months' imprisonment without, or two months with, hard labour.[2]

The wages to increase which the recipients could not combine are described as "excessively low."[3] "In 1800 the average wages of artisans were 18s. a week in London. They gradually rose by about seventy-five per cent. during the years of dearth.....When greater plenty prevailed they fell. In the country they were about a third less than in London."[4] Spinners were better paid, getting 24s. to 26s. a week from 1808 to 1815. Weavers, on the other hand, were miserably off, their wages falling from 13s. 10d. a week in 1802, when wheat cost only 67s. 9d. a quarter, to 4s. 3½d. in 1817, when it stood at 94s.[5] The introduction of machinery, leading as it did to the employment of women and children in the factories, is responsible for this decline. It also had the effect, in some instances, of throwing great numbers out of work altogether. Thus in 1811–12 a particular frame for stocking-weaving came into use at Nottingham which enabled one man to do the work of many, throwing the superfluous hands out of employment. Their remedy was to break into houses and destroy the frames—a

[1] H. de B. Gibbins, p. 417.
[2] Stephen, *History of the Criminal Law in England,* vol. iii., pp. 207–8.
[3] H. de B. Gibbins, p. 424.
[4] Thorold Rogers, *Six Centuries of Work and Wages,* p. 494.
[5] H. de B. Gibbins, pp. 424–25.

reprehensible act of violence, but more excusable than the conduct of the landowning monopolists who at this time were excluding foreign corn in order to keep up their own rents. The legislature, however, thought differently, and passed a Bill punishing the frame-breakers with death. On this occasion Byron, who opposed the second reading, told the Lords that he had traversed the seat of war in the Peninsula, and had been in some of the most oppressed provinces of Turkey; but never under the most despotic of infidel governments had he beheld such squalid wretchedness as he had seen since his return in the very heart of a Christian country.[1]

What Byron saw was only a specimen of the distress that prevailed through all the manufacturing districts of Great Britain, usually accompanied by the destruction of machinery and even of mills. Other causes besides the substitution of mechanical power for human labour had concurred to bring it about. Since 1797 cash payments had been suspended, and inflated issues of paper, combined with the bad harvest of 1809, had resulted in a terrible commercial crisis by which great numbers of operatives were thrown out of employment. Another crisis followed in 1814, caused this time by a good harvest, which, thanks to the protectionist system, ruined the farmers and obliged more than a third of the country banks to stop payment. Manufacturers suffered in consequence, and the destruction of machinery recommenced.[2]

[1] Byron, *Letters,* vol. ii., p. 429.

[2] Harriet Martineau, *History of England* (1800–1815), p. 398. (Bohn's ed.)

The immediate effect of peace with France was not to diminish but to aggravate the distress. Exhausted by a long war, the Continental countries could not pay for our goods in money, for they had none to spare, nor in their own goods, for these were kept out by our protective tariff. As a consequence, in 1816 our export trade had fallen sixteen per cent., and our import trade twenty per cent., from the level reached two years before. At the same time the value of the currency rose with the prospect of a return to cash payments, and the price of commodities rose with it, but to a considerably greater extent.[1] A bad harvest came to complete the catastrophe. In 1816 the price of wheat rose from 52s. to 103s. per quarter. Rioting, accompanied by depredation, incendiarism, and machine-breaking, prevailed all over the country. It seemed as if Napoleon, though fallen, had dragged down the conquering nation in a common ruin with himself.

We have now to consider how the Industrial Terror, which was an episode in the Industrial Revolution, modified public opinion during the first years of the Peace. But that is a subject which must be reserved for the following chapter.

[1] Spencer Walpole, *History of England,* vol. i., pp. 330–31.

Chapter IV.

THE LIBERAL ODYSSEY

We have seen in the foregoing chapter how the great Napoleonic War was accompanied by a remarkable rally of Liberalism, and generally by a more hopeful and progressive tone in the leading circles of opinion. Unfortunately, that forward-looking movement received a sudden check from the economic evils which war had brought in its train. The great reaction against liberal thought of every kind commonly associated with Burke's attack on the French Revolution did not really set in with full virulence until the years following Waterloo, when all danger from France was over. In the early nineties it had been made clear enough that the English people were fairly satisfied with the Government under which they lived, and certainly had no wish to imitate the behaviour of their neighbours across the Channel. Canning's *Knife-grinder,* if it meant anything at all, meant that the poor had no political or social grievances. Pitt became unpopular not because of his repressive measures, but because of the war. The war itself became popular when it was waged to protect England from invasion or to deliver Spain from oppression. The old King grew in his subjects' affection, and the people were content to be guided by his opinion on the Catholic claims.[1]

[1] Ward, *Letters to Ivy,* p. 85.

Now, it happened that the disappearance of George III. from the political scene in 1810 nearly coincided with the beginning of that widespread distress and discontent which the war at first obscured or palliated, but which the restoration of peace brought into full relief. Royal authority passed from the most honoured and steadfast of English sovereigns to the one who as Regent and King made the royal office more despicable and more despised than it had been made by any of his predecessors since Edward II. Tories might affect an enthusiastic loyalty for the hereditary representative of the Plantagenets and Tudors; but they must have felt that one who exhibited the vices of Louis XV. without his ability, and the vacillating incompetence of Louis XVI. without his respectability, was hardly a chief round whom they could rally with much confidence of success.

The interests symbolised by this degraded dandy were diversified, enormous, and in extreme peril. Capitalism, whether agricultural or manufacturing, was directly threatened by mob-violence, and indirectly threatened by the agitation for Parliamentary Reform. Those who advocated a large addition to the popular element in the House of Commons made no secret of their intention to use it as leverage for abolishing the protective tariff which mill-owners and landlords alike regarded as necessary to their existence. What was at least equally serious, the fundholders were threatened with the loss in whole or part of the interest on their investments. It was argued, not without some slight show of reason, that most of the war loans had been contracted in a depreciated paper

currency, and that therefore to pay the interest in gold would be robbing the poor to make the rich still richer. A reduction of twenty per cent. or so on the dividends was freely discussed; and to make up for the contemplated cutting-down of taxes all round it seemed not unlikely that a reformed Parliament would sponge out the debt altogether.

It has been already mentioned that Bentham, probably under the influence of James Mill, had by this time gone over to the democratic side, accepting even the extreme proposal of universal suffrage. Law reform had always been the object nearest to the heart of the old philosopher himself, and it had been adopted as a standing article in the programme of his followers. Now his contemplated reforms avowedly struck at the profits of the legal profession, and so far were likely to throw the whole of that influential body, conservative enough by nature, into the ranks of the Tory party. No professional interest (except the hangman's) was directly touched by Romilly's endeavours to reduce the number of capital offences; but none who trembled for the security of their property could view without alarm proposals calculated to diminish the penalties by which it was safeguarded.

Of all corporations the Anglican clergy, with the Bishops and the Universities at their head, were by training and association the most uncompromising enemies of progress, the most disposed to identify innovation of any kind with the extreme of revolutionary Radicalism. Their privileged position in the State was endangered by the Catholic and Dissenting claims, their tithes by free trade in corn, their Catechism by unsectarian education,

their infallible Bible by the advance of science, and all these collectively by whatever was involved in Parliamentary Reform.

These general motives for resistance were strengthened by the presence within the Church of gross abuses upheld by a powerful though small body of opinion, while those who suffered by them, though many, were weak and disunited. As an illustration of the length to which obstruction could be carried on such points, it may be mentioned that when Perceval, a Tory of the Tories, and personally most clerical, proposed in 1808 a measure compelling absentee pluralists to provide resident curates at a moderate salary for their neglected benefices, his Bill was opposed by the whole bench of Bishops, and rejected on the third reading without a division by the House of Lords. It was carried in 1813 by Lord Harrowby, a Liberal Peer, "amid the suppressed murmurs of the holders of Church property,"[1] but not without leaving a presumption of what might be expected from them in the coming conflict.

Finally, a much more limited but not insignificant contribution to Tory opinion came from the West Indian planters. With the success of the agitation for the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, Wilberforce and his friends turned their efforts against slavery itself, which before that had been carefully left out of the campaign. And the planters could point to this rise in the demands of their assailants as a warning example of what might follow on a first concession to Jacobinical attacks on the

[1] Walpole, *Life of Spencer Perceval,* vol. i., pp. 286–87.

rights of property in the name of the rights of man.

This coalition of prejudice and panic put an end for many years to the Liberal influences which had more or less asserted themselves in the Cabinet or in Parliament after Pitt's death. Power steadily gravitated to the most reactionary members of the Tory party. In 1810 the struggle for the Premiership between Canning and Perceval was decided in Perceval's favour, his rival quitting the Government and not returning to office until 1816, when he rejoined it to defend the policy of repression. The Marquess Wellesley resigned in 1812, and remained in opposition as a pro-Catholic and Free Trader for nearly ten years. Huskisson, the future Free Trader, gave his support in 1815 to extreme Protectionist legislation. After Perceval's death the leading spirits in the Regent's Government were Liverpool, Eldon, Castlereagh, and Sidmouth. All four opposed Catholic Emancipation, at that time the irreducible minimum of concession to Liberal principles—Castlereagh on grounds of expediency, his colleagues on grounds of sincere conviction. Liverpool was an average stolid Tory, distinguished only for his unrivalled power of keeping in office. Eldon, the Lord Chancellor, was Conservatism itself personified; he hated innovation as such and resisted it at all points, defending not only every political abuse, but even the atrocities of the English criminal law. The Court of Chancery is largely indebted for its evil reputation to the dilatoriness with which he allowed enormous arrears of business to accumulate during his tenure of office. As a statesman Castlereagh was the ablest and best of the four. His

administration of the war during its last years proved highly efficient; and at a critical moment he held together the European coalition against Napoleon when everything depended on its stability. After the peace he became the most unpopular member of the Government, chiefly because as Leader of the House of Commons he had to defend its policy of repression and of resistance to Reform. In reality, so far as any single individual deserved to be made responsible for the state of the country, Sidmouth was that one. This pompous mediocrity is best known to history as the Addington who replaced Pitt in the confidence of George III. when the understanding on which the union with Ireland was carried had to be violated, that the royal conscience might be relieved at the expense of the nation's honour and safety. Raised to the peerage under the title of Viscount Sidmouth, the same inglorious leader contrived to make his way into every subsequent Cabinet but one, until he became Home Secretary in 1812, continuing in that office for the next ten years. His administration is marked by riot and conspiracy on the one side, repression and bloodshed on the other. In 1819 a large open-air meeting held in St. Peter's Fields, near Manchester, to petition for Parliamentary Reform, was attacked by mounted yeomanry and dispersed with some loss of life. At about the same time a batch of coercive measures known as the Six Acts were passed, some of them legitimate enough, but others having for their sole object to put down all adverse criticism of the Government at public meetings or in the Press. Twenty years before, Portland's administration

of the Home Office had preserved order without anything like the same ferocity. It must be owned that some of the Whig leaders supported Sidmouth's coercive measures; but they were not responsible for the policy that made force the only remedy for discontent.

The weakest, or at any rate the most assailable point in the Tory position was, as I have said, the character of the Regent, whose vices did the cause of free representation as much good as the virtues of his father had done it harm. For a time the popularity of his daughter and heiress, the Princess Charlotte, screened him and his office from attack; with her death the last hope of the English Monarchy seemed to expire, leaving it a prey to internecine strife. For if the Regent's daughter was dead, his wife, the unfortunate Caroline of Brunswick, Princess of Wales, still lived, serving the Opposition as a pawn with which to hold the future King in check for the present, and to push up to queen for his destruction at an opportune crisis of the game. So long as the Whigs counted on his favour she had been a Tory heroine; after he deserted them she passed to their side. When the Continent was reopened to English travellers, the Princess, a born Bohemian, took the opportunity of going abroad, and wandered about in very compromising company, watched everywhere by her husband's spies. On the death of George III., by Brougham's orders,[1] she at once returned to England, claiming

[1] This has recently been placed beyond all doubt by the publication of a private letter from Brougham to Creevey. (*Creevey Papers*, vol. i., p. 297.)

to be officially recognised as Queen. On landing she found herself the heroine of the Reform party and of the people. Her journey from Dover to London was a triumphal progress. The King and his Ministers met the attack by laying before the House of Lords a Bill to dissolve his marriage and to deprive the Queen of her title, evidence of her alleged misconduct being supplied in justification of the measure. For several weeks the country was deluged with filth. A general impression prevailed that the King was morally though not legally debarred by his own profligacy from seeking to divorce a wife who on the least merciful view had been much less guilty than himself. The Bill passed its third reading in the Lords by a small majority; then it was dropped amid the rejoicings of the people. How little they cared for her personally, how entirely their jubilation was meant as an expression of passionate hostility to the King, appeared soon afterwards, when her frantic efforts to be present at his coronation were met with indifference by some and with insult by others in the vast multitude assembled round the approaches to Westminster Abbey. A few days after the ceremony Caroline died broken-hearted, but the work for which Brougham had used her was accomplished. The personal power of the monarch had received a mortal blow, although it still lingered for several years in the agonies of dissolution, with influence enough to prevent the formation of a united and powerful executive.

Great events do not spring from trifling causes; but these really do determine what after all is a trifling circumstance in great events, that is the

precise moment of their occurrence. What people called the Queen's Trial was such a trifling event. By it we can date with precision the beginning of a new era, just as by the divorce of Catherine of Arragon we can date with precision the beginning of the English Reformation. Brougham, ablest and most energetic of the first Edinburgh Reviewers, and since 1815 a Parliamentary power of the first order, attained the zenith of popularity by his defence of the Queen before the House of Lords. This position made him a sort of link between the Radicals, with whom he had become disgusted, and the kid-glove Whigs of Holland House, who held scornfully aloof from the dirty work of agitation. On the other hand, the Ministry was weakened to an equal extent by the secession of Canning. This had been postponed till after the withdrawal of the Divorce Bill, but was understood to be connected with an attachment of old standing for the Queen, which made him unwilling to share in the responsibility for her persecution. How great was the loss is shown by the fact that his eloquence had just before this induced the House to reject a motion of Brougham's tending to abridge the power of the Crown by a rearrangement of the King's Civil List.[1] Next year the weakened and divided Ministry had to accept an important economical reform proposed by Joseph Hume, a disciple of Bentham, and largely to reduce the expenditure in deference to the demand of the people.

Under the terrible stress of the Tory reaction

[1] Walpole, vol. ii., pp. 88–89.

Whitbread and Romilly had committed suicide, Francis Horner died young, Ponsonby not indeed young, but prematurely. It was now the turn of those in power to succumb. Within little more than a twelvemonth Liverpool temporarily withdrew from public life, disabled by a domestic calamity, Sidmouth wearily surrendered the Home Office, and Castlereagh, now Marquess of Londonderry, died by his own hand. These things were not accidents, but incidents of strife, almost of civil war.

The triumph of titled obstruction was over, and untitled reformers made their way into the seats of power. Canning became Foreign Minister, forced on the reluctant King by public opinion; and in returning to office he also returned to the Liberal principles of his youth. Robert Peel, who had already begun to accept the guidance of public opinion, took Sidmouth's place as Home Secretary. Huskisson was not indeed made what he ought to have been, Chancellor of the Exchequer, the incompetent Vansittart being relieved in that exalted position by the somewhat less incompetent Robinson; but as President of the Board of Trade he directed the financial policy of England and initiated those great Free Trade measures which were to restore the prosperity she had lost. Eldon still unhappily remained Chancellor, to the ruin of his broken-hearted suitors; but it was beyond his power to arrest the progress of Criminal Law Reform. This had been long and unsuccessfully advocated by Romilly, a disciple of Bentham. After his death Mackintosh took up the work and

scored a first victory over the Government in 1819. Next year he persuaded Parliament to repeal the death-penalty for private stealing in shops.[1] In 1823 he proposed a more comprehensive scheme of reform, but was induced to surrender it into the hands of Peel, by whom much of it was carried out during his tenure of the Home Office. In the same year Peel also put an end to the depreciated paper currency, which Cobbett, the chief Radical journalist, had long denounced. In 1824 the Combination Laws making strikes penal were repealed.

Still the true chief of the remodelled Government and its most magnetic figure was not Peel, but he whom Heine has called the great, the noble, the adored Canning,[2] a phrase which, coming from such a writer, proves Canning to have been also the acknowledged leader of European Liberalism. His name brings us back to that world-wide movement by which the French Revolution, after its perversion and degradation under Napoleon, after its apparent overthrow by the allied Sovereigns, resumed its chequered course in a series of conflicts whose final outcome is not yet decided.

We have seen how French aggressions on the independence of other nationalities first alienated English Liberal opinion from the Revolutionary cause, and ultimately brought the English reactionaries themselves to become champions of liberty, not only in the Iberian Peninsula, but all over

[1] *Life of Mackintosh,* vol. ii., p. 390.

[2] Heine, *Englische Fragmente,* xii. Alison says that he was "looked up to as the head of the Liberal party throughout the globe" (*History of Europe,* 1815–52; vol. iv., p. 119).

Europe. It now remains to add that the peoples were induced to join their hereditary Sovereigns in the final revolt against Napoleon by an understanding that the recovery of independence from a foreign power would be followed by the concession of constitutional liberty at home. That understanding was violated, and the restored Governments had nothing more pressing than to reinstate, so far as they could, the old system of privilege and superstition, entering even into a compact, known as the Holy Alliance, for mutual assistance in repressing their subjects' revolutionary aspirations. With this compact the English Cabinet had nothing to do, although Castlereagh was accused, wrongly as would seem, of giving it a moral support. Still, the unjust treatment of Ireland, to which he had made himself a party, and his coercive rule at home, placed him in line with the Continental despots. Had he lived to attend the Congress of Verona, it is possible that public opinion might have assigned him a very different position—the position actually won by his successor, Canning.

Years before Napoleon's fall a movement destined to represent, and represent alone, the revolutionary cause during the first period of legitimist reaction, had begun to take shape in the Western hemisphere. The French conquest of Spain gave the Spanish colonies in America a long-desired opportunity for asserting their independence ; and by the time that the French armies had cleared out of Spain her dominion in the New World was practically at an end. Nevertheless, the conflict, which was fought out with far more heroism than that between England and her Colonies, continued

to rage for many years, furnishing a new field for their energies to great numbers of English soldiers and sailors whom the peace had thrown out of work, and promising to furnish English manufacturers with new markets for their wares when the Spanish monopoly should have been definitely abolished.

At length the sword of oppression turned against its own heart. The armies assembled in the Spanish sea-ports for the re-conquest of America mutinied and declared for constitutional government. The movement spread with electric rapidity all over the country, and in a few weeks King Ferdinand swore fidelity to the Constitution of 1812. Naples followed suit immediately, and another Ferdinand went through the same comedy as his cousin at Madrid. In Portugal the tyrannical regency was deposed and a representative assembly convened. Next year an abortive insurrectionary movement broke out in Roumania, followed by a more hopeful Greek rising in the Peloponnesus and the Ægean islands.

Reaction followed close on the heels of Revolution. Before Greece had taken fire an Austrian army entered Naples and reinstated the perjured King in the authority he had so abused. Turkish vengeance was even more prompt and terrible. Four Greek Archbishops were hanged on the Easter Day of the same year. Then followed a series of massacres, among the worst of those by which Ottoman dominion is periodically signalised, culminating in the awful devastation of Chios, where 70,000 Greeks were either slaughtered or sold into slavery during the spring of 1822.

Russia, so far from protecting the Greek Christians, left them to their fate, and occupied herself with putting down liberty elsewhere. For this purpose the Czar was preparing to send his Cossacks into Spain, when France intervened and overthrew the new Constitution by force of arms. Among the victims of absolutist vengeance was Diaz, the William Wallace of Spain, justly famed under the name of the Empecinado for the part he had played as a guerilla chief in the War of Independence against Napoleon.

At the first outbreak of the European Revolution a Congress of the great Powers assembled at Verona (1822) to deliberate on the situation. Wellington represented England. He did not love popular government; but neither, probably, did he like to see the country he had freed from French vassalage brought again under the same yoke by Napoleon's puny successor. Canning, who had begun the Peninsular War, and who was an enthusiast for national independence, hated to see England's most glorious work undone. But he could not stop France, who this time had the armed force of the Continent at her back. Two things, however, he could do: he could protect America from the same sort of treatment, and he could also protect Portugal. At the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818 the Czar had proposed that the fleets of Europe should be sent to crush Republicanism in South America. Castlereagh raised no objection, but declined on England's behalf to join in the work. In 1823 a well-founded impression prevailed that France, either singly or with her allies, designed to follow up the conquest of Spain by a naval expedition for the reduction of

her American colonies; with a prospect of indemnifying herself by territorial acquisitions for the expenses of the war. Canning intimated that England would not tolerate such an enterprise; and as he disposed of a fleet superior to all the fleets of the world put together, his remonstrances were listened to with respect. Much to the disgust of the Powers, he also recognised the South American Republics, and gave an additional safeguard to their independence by suggesting to the President of the United States what is still known as the Monroe Doctrine—that is, the principle that no European State may acquire new territory on the American Continent or interfere in the domestic concerns of any American community.

Canning's next move was made in defence of Portugal. Don Miguel, the absolutist heir to the Portuguese throne, had conspired against the Cortes, and levied troops to destroy the new Constitution. He was driven into exile; but his army retired to the other side of the Spanish frontier, and, under the protection of the restored Spanish monarchy, waged war against the liberties of their country. Acting under a treaty that obliged England to defend her old ally against foreign attack, Canning sent troops to Lisbon. Secured by their presence, the Liberal Portuguese Regency drove Don Miguel's forces back into Spain, where the reactionary government now saw itself obliged to disown and disband them.

However, neither South America nor Portugal were interesting enough in themselves to command the undivided enthusiasm of Liberal opinion. That could only be awakened by the cause of Greece. Here the influence of literature acted

more powerfully than political oratory or journalism to enlist the sympathies of Englishmen. Members of the governing aristocracy had not forgotten their classical education. "We are all Greeks!" exclaimed Shelley. Byron succeeded best when he struck this chord of sympathy in the Second Canto of *Childe Harold,* in the *Giaour,* and in the *Corsair.* True, the same qualities that endeared the Chosen People of Culture to these two young poets were regarded with some dread and suspicion by politicians of the opposite school. The best Greek history then existing, Mitford's, published between 1784 and 1810, is, as Mill observes, "penetrated with the anti-Jacobin spirit in every line," and the *Quarterly Review* "laboured as diligently for many years to vilify the Athenian republic as the American."[1] But, on the other hand, quite apart from classic traditions, much in the Greek cause appealed to the romanticism generally associated with reactionary political opinions. Elsewhere the revolutionary cause was, truly or not, represented by its enemies as an anti-Christian crusade. In Greece it stood for Christianity; and Shelley, himself an unbeliever, in the Preface to his *Hellas,* unhesitatingly denounces the Turks as the enemies of Christianity, while in a chorus of the drama itself he contrasts the immortal cross of Christ with the dying moon of Mahomet. It is not wonderful, then, that the last of France's most Christian Kings "manifested on behalf of the suffering Christians of Greece a chivalrous warmth of heart, a gallantry, and a generosity which did honour to his character."[2]

[1] *Dissertations and Discussions,* vol i., p. 113.
[2] Stapleton, *Life of Canning,* vol iii., p. 226.

In Byron's poetry the classic and romantic currents are so perfectly fused together that none can tell what share each element contributed to the genius which reaches its highest expression in *The Isles of Greece*. His, therefore, was the decisive word; his, even more, the decisive deed. No poet's personality had ever counted for so much as an element in his literary success, and that even when it was understood to be the personality of a reckless and faithless voluptuary. How incalculable, then, must have been its effect on public opinion when Byron came forward no longer as the sentimental singer of Greek woes, but as an armed soldier in the war for Greek independence! His life, had it been prolonged, would have done less for European emancipation than his death; death on the field would have been less effective than death from exposure and fever; for that, so uncoveted, made the heroism of his self-devotion more apparent.

Canning had a much harder part to play than Byron's, and he fell in the war of opinion by a more tragic fate, bequeathing ruin to his party and victory to his two great rivals, Peel and Earl Grey; but victory also to principles he held more dear than any party distinctions. His sympathies were with Greece, and what in the circumstances could be done to save her he did, although now it seems little enough. Then, as half a century later, the problem was to use Russia as an instrument for coercing the Porte, without at the same time allowing the Czar to seize Constantinople, with the chance of kindling a European war. Just before his death Canning, with the help of France, had nearly solved the problem; and, although the

decisive battle of Navarino, which he did not live to see, may have gone beyond his intentions, it was no more than the natural result of his policy. A still more momentous result was the breaking-up of the Holy Alliance, the isolation of the German Powers, and the definite enrolment of France among the friends of European liberty.

On Liverpool's retirement in 1827, Canning, who had long been the ruling spirit of the Cabinet, became, in name as well as in fact, Prime Minister of England. His advent to the supreme dignity marked another step in Liberalism, for it involved the transfer of office from Tories to Whigs on a considerable scale, besides securing the independent support of some Whigs who did not take office.

The party shibboleth at that time was Catholic Emancipation. Canning renounced the support of his ablest colleagues because they opposed it; he accepted the co-operation of former opponents because they supported it, and this notwithstanding the King's known objection to Emancipation. It seems, therefore, certain that, had the Prime Minister lived, it would have formed a part of his legislative programme. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that the great popular chief, although in this instance he represented the most enlightened opinion of the country, and although the Radicals, no less than the Whigs, were with him, did not represent the opinion of the masses. To understand how this came about we must go a little further back.

The Catholic question, when it first arose, did

not particularly interest the English people. Had George III. agreed with Pitt, they would have tolerated the presence of some fifty Irish Catholic gentlemen and of a few English Catholic peers in Parliament; but, as George III. did not agree, they thought he should have his own way even at the expense of losing their trusted pilot before he had brought the ship of State into port. At the general election of 1807, following immediately after the King had dismissed his Ministers because they proposed to admit Catholic officers to high commands in the army and navy, some of the leading Whigs lost their seats because they had opposed his Majesty's wishes. A shrewd observer, himself a Liberal, remarked at the time that "as long as the King is anti-Catholic the people will be so too."[1] A few years later royal authority passed to the Regent, and in 1812 Emancipation seemed in sight; but personal difficulties prevented the formation of a Whig Administration, and, unhappily for the peace of Ireland, the moment for generous concession passed by, never to return.

With the end of the war English opinion took a turn most unfavourable to religious justice. For, until Napoleon fell, various Biblical prophecies, formerly supposed to be predictions of the Papal power, had been interpreted as referring to his career. He was the little horn in Daniel, or he was Antichrist. After Waterloo, Protestant theology reverted to the old exegesis. Besides, the claim to personal infallibility as Head of the Church, now put forward more audaciously than

[1] Ward, *Letters to Ivy*, p. 85.

ever on the Pope's behalf, produced an unreasonable, but not unnatural, irritation among those who disowned his authority altogether. We can therefore understand why, when Canning accepted office in 1816, "the opinions of the great mass of the population in England had become, more than they had been, hostile to Emancipation."[1]

No progress was made until the beginning of the great Liberal movement in 1821. At that date the unreformed House was probably more enlightened than the people. At any rate, it passed a Catholic Relief Bill by a majority of 19.[2] This was rejected in the Lords by a majority of 39, with the heir presumptive to the throne at its head. Then Canning passed a Bill through the Commons admitting, as an experiment, Catholic peers to sit in the Upper House; but the Lords rejected this also by a majority of 42. In two subsequent sessions the conflict of opinion between the Houses was repeated, once before and once after Canning's death. As usual it was settled by that *ultima ratio populorum,* the threat of an appeal to physical force. A great demagogue, Daniel O'Connell, had so united and organised the Irish demand for justice that its voice spoke with irresistible effect to an English Legislature divided against itself. After refusing to accept Canning's policy during his life, Peel and Wellington were obliged to put it into execution as his heirs, under the form of a humiliating submission to violence.

Yet, at the cost of civil war, force might have

[1] Stapleton, *Life of Canning,* vol. i., p. 117.
[2] May, *Constitutional History of England,* vol. ii., p. 380.

been met by force. Wellington declared that, by resisting Emancipation, he might have made himself the most popular of Ministers; and during the progress of the measure through Parliament innumerable petitions against it poured in to the King.[1] As has been already mentioned, this anti-Catholic feeling went back to the end of the war, being in fact the outcome of a wider and older movement. Besides starting a number of new sects, Methodism had given new life to the religious communities already in existence. From his accession George III. had been noted for personal piety, although his example does not seem to have influenced Court or official circles. The first religious minister of whom we hear is Perceval, much occupied with Church questions, and no less regular in his attendance at public worship than Pitt had been in his absence from it. Still more punctilious was Wilberforce, who called Perceval's attention to the danger of convoking Parliament for a Monday, whereby gentlemen who lived at a distance from London might be tempted into Sunday travelling.[2] Reaction in religion went hand in hand with reaction in politics. Southey became at once a Tory and a High Churchman. Wordsworth remained true to his early sympathies for a much longer period, but definitely enrolled himself on the same side as his friend and neighbour after the Peace—driven to it probably by the rising storm of discontent among the poor. In 1821 he wrote, *invitâ Minervâ,* a long series of

[1] Sir Herbert Maxwell, *Life of Wellington,* vol. ii., pp. 240 and 237.

[2] Walpole, *Life of Perceval,* vol. i., p. 303.

Ecclesiastical Sonnets, strongly anti-Papal, and directed towards the glorification of the Anglican Church on its Protestant side. In 1816 and 1817 Coleridge published two "Lay Sermons," proposing to remedy the evils affecting England by a mystical interpretation of the Bible (in whose inspiration, by the way, he at no time believed) and glorifying Perceval as "the best and wisest statesman this country has possessed since the Revolution."[1] All three poets were passionately opposed to Emancipation, Wordsworth in particular prophesying that Catholic members of Parliament would co-operate with "other dissenters and infidels" in pulling down the Church of England.[2] They probably would have resisted the grant of a million for building new churches, voted in 1818 at a time of great financial distress, and the further grant of half a million for the same purpose voted in 1824, of which we hear that it was "not popular in the country."[3]

Coleridge, in his first Lay Sermon, cautiously deprecates the interpretation of Scripture prophecies as miraculous predictions of events in modern history. But for the mass of uneducated British Protestants they had no other meaning and no other interest. The nervous strain set up by the great war continued after its close, and bred a diseased craving for new sources of excitement. These were supplied to some extent by the pietistic movement; but intense religious feeling needs to be discharged along lines of greater activity than Bible-readings

[1] Coleridge, *Church and State,* p. 306.
[2] Knight, *Life of Wordsworth,* vol. iii., p. 57.
[3] Walpole, *History of England,* vol. ii., p. 161.

and prayer-meetings can supply. Some threw themselves into an agitation for the abolition of West Indian slavery. Others started missions for the conversion of Mohammedans and heathens to Christianity, or for the conversion of Irish and Continental Papists to what they were pleased to call the Gospel. Now that Southern Europe lay open to proselytism no more seemed needed for its regeneration than the gratuitous and wholesale distribution of Bibles and Testaments among the benighted inhabitants. But there were more sanguine and enthusiastic spirits whom even the prospect of a new Reformation could not content. These looked forward with a fearful joy to some great catastrophe heralding the Second Advent and the end of the world. They soon found a preacher to their mind in the person of a tall, handsome, and eloquent young Scotchman named Edward Irving, now best known as the early friend of Jane Welsh and Thomas Carlyle. In 1822 Irving came up to London, and soon attracted crowds to the chapel where his oratorical gifts were first displayed. Canning paid his preaching a high compliment in the House of Commons; and the fashionable world flocked to hear his impassioned proclamation of judgment to come. In 1827 he moved to a larger church, where audiences of a thousand persons hung spell-bound on his lips. That date marks the climax of his career as an index of popular religious feeling in England. Subsequently his name becomes associated with struggles and delusions which do not concern us here. Let it suffice to mention that, even so late as the close of 1831, millenarian enthusiasm still prevailed to

such an extent that anyone who doubted the near approach of the Second Advent was denounced by the majority of religious persons as an infidel,[1] even the enlightened Dr. Arnold of Rugby holding that a terrible catastrophe of some sort might be soon expected.[2]

Side by side with these noisy manifestations of reactionary mysticism a counter-current of steadier and more voluminous energy had set in. The progress of English Rationalism seemed to have been long arrested, but in reality it had been working underground, giving even such occasional evidences of continued activity as Gibbon's Roman History for scholarship and Paine's *Age of Reason* for popularity. Like the religious revival, it gained new prominence with the Peace. We have seen how, long before the end of the war, education had become a foremost interest in English life, and had at once connected itself with religious controversy. Lancaster went for simple Bible-teaching, Bell for Church control and the Catechism. Bentham took up their method of mutual instruction, and made it the basis of an elaborate educational system which he proposed at once to put into practice in a sort of college to be built on his own grounds. The religious difficulty was to be got rid of by eliminating religion altogether from the proposed curriculum. Various titled and wealthy persons promised their support, but withdrew it on finding that the secular scheme was denounced as dangerous by the clergy. Bentham retorted by an unsparing criticism of the Church Catechism, an attack on the personal

[1] Thirlwall, *Letters Literary and Theological,* p. 101.
[2] Stanley, *Life of Arnold,* vol. i., p. 252 (8th ed.).

character of St. Paul, and an *Analysis of Natural Religion,* written in collaboration with George Grote, the future historian of Greece. The object of this last work is to prove that the belief in God and a future life is most pernicious to human happiness, both by its direct effect in exciting terror, and indirectly by leading to the domination of an anti-social priestly class.

Although Bentham's scheme of secular education had at first no success, it remained a fundamental principle with his followers, and was realised, if only to a very limited extent, by the establishment of University College, London. The idea of that institution first came from the poet Campbell, a staunch Liberal, and was promptly taken up by the Benthamites, who, in association with other independent thinkers, raised £160,000 for the endowment of a college, opened in 1828, from whose curriculum religious instruction was omitted, and for the tenure of whose chairs no theological qualification was required.[1]

However, the main stream of opposition to religious orthodoxy was not represented by Bentham's school with its anonymous publications, but by the older Radicalism, whose most popular exponent was William Cobbett. Like Bentham, this powerful journalist had begun as an enemy of democracy, but, like him, had come to think that electoral reform supplied the only remedy for bad government. Imprisoned and heavily fined for showing up a cruel case of flogging in the army during the war, he became after the Peace the most widely

[1] Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians,* vol. ii., p. 32.

read advocate of retrenchment, Free Trade, full representation of the people, and Catholic Emancipation, always basing his views on thoroughly practical considerations and on a profound study of English history. Driven out of the country by Sidmouth's repressive Acts, he took refuge in America. On a former visit to the United States he had attacked Priestley as a "Unitarian infidel," and helped to circulate slanderous stories about Paine. It may be gathered from his sneers at dissent and deism that Cobbett was at that time a good Churchman. Agreement with Paine's views on paper currency led him to form a juster estimate of the democratic freethinker's moral character. Paine died at New York in 1809, and a story gained credence that he had recanted on his deathbed. Cobbett proved by cross-examining the witnesses that no such recantation had been made. What was more he dug up Paine's bones, and carried them with him on his return to England in 1819, prophesying that these relics would effect a reformation in Church and State.[1]

Much ridicule has been cast on Cobbett's proceedings by people who would see nothing to laugh at or deplore in the second funeral of Napoleon, the transfer of whose body from St. Helena to Paris led on to the despotism and superstition of the Second Empire. At any rate, the arrival of Paine's bones in England coincides with a great revival of interest in his writings and the beginning of a sharp struggle between liberty of religious opinion and authority, in which liberty finally won.

[1] Moncure Conway, *Life of Paine,* vol. ii., p. 428.

The Regency, although a period of political reaction and reviving bigotry, was not on the whole, till near its end, a period of persecution. In 1812 Eaton, a bookseller, was prosecuted for selling the *Age of Reason,* and sentenced by Lord Ellenborough to be imprisoned for eighteen months and to stand for an hour in the pillory. He "underwent his public punishment amid the waving of hats and cheering of the crowd, not a voice or arm being raised against him."[1] At the end of 1817 another bookseller, William Hone, was prosecuted and underwent three distinct trials, the second and third also before Lord Ellenborough, for publishing certain alleged blasphemous parodies on the Litany, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. Notwithstanding the violent efforts of his judges to procure a condemnation, Hone succeeded in persuading the jury that his sole object had been to throw ridicule on political abuses, and on each occasion he was acquitted.

Such a plea as Hone's could not be raised by Richard Carlile. This remarkable man edited and sold, among other books of a similar character, Paine's theological writings. After a three days' trial he was sentenced to a fine of £1,500 and eighteen months' imprisonment—a term extended to six years from his inability to pay the fine. The shopmen who sold his books all that time were also seized and imprisoned—the places of the victims being filled up immediately by eager volunteers—until recourse was had to a machine by which the volume asked for was given out and

[1] Dowden, *Life of Shelley,* vol. i., p. 289.

payment for it received without the vendor's face being seen by the purchaser. Large sums were raised for Carlile's benefit during his imprisonment, and on his release he found an establishment provided for him in Fleet Street, where the incriminated works were henceforth sold with impunity.

From Dorchester Gaol Carlile issued an *Address to Men of Science, calling upon them to stand forward and vindicate the Truth.* In this pamphlet he mentions the case of Professor (afterwards Sir) William Lawrence, who, according to him, was deprived of his post at the College of Surgeons for having attacked the prevalent religious beliefs in his lectures.[1] But Lawrence was an exception. Men of science under the reactionary *régime* had fallen off considerably from the standard of Priestley and Erasmus Darwin; so much so, indeed, that their most brilliant living representative, Sir H. Davy, joined the obscurantists in denouncing the new science of geology as dangerous to revealed religion, to the disgust even of Coleridge, who called the German Biblical critics infidels, while privately supporting their views.

Coleridge, in fact, contributed largely to what was now becoming a chief factor in progressive English thought—that is, renewed intercourse with the Continent. It has been seen what a powerful stimulus was given to English science and literature in the previous generation by the French Revolution and by German Romanticism. That impulse continued to operate, although with somewhat abated energy, all through the Napoleonic

[1] Carlile, *An Address, etc.*, London, 1821, p. 19.

war; with the Peace it came up again in a greatly generalised form, especially after England, under Canning's guidance, made herself the champion of popular government all over the world. English travellers dispersed themselves through every country; English readers ransacked the history and literature of all times. We find a reflex of that boundless curiosity more especially in the souls of two poetesses—in the metrical essays of Felicia Hemans, in the youthful studies of Elizabeth Barrett. It was nourished by the still fresher enthusiasm of American tourists, and returned on Britain herself by the candid admiration of foreign critics for the words and works of this victorious island at the epochs not only of its present but of its former glory.

Italy had long been a favourite haunt of English travellers. But in the eighteenth century it had been more a land of curios and connoisseurs; now it was the home of great traditions and exalted hopes, framed in scenes of corresponding magnificence. There Byron and Shelley first found their true selves, found in that environment their poetic genius doubled at a stroke. Under their lead English poetry first fully rose from a realism often petty, always didactic, to the supreme heights of true romance; but a romance definitely dissociated from superstition and reaction, linked as in the Greek War of Independence with the classical traditions of reason, self-government, and freedom. Byron had already given the signal for that alliance in the first cantos of *Childe Harold;* he confirmed it by the inspiration of Ravenna and the example of Missolonghi.

In Keats the spirit of Hellenism, considered as the kingdom of man wedded to nature, reigns without a rival. Probably he was indebted to Byron for an emancipation so complete that no trace of a struggle with supernaturalist beliefs has been left in his works. Yet, so far as Shelley and Keats follow any poetic tradition, the predecessor with whom they can best be connected is not Byron, but Southey. In *Queen Mab* the formal imitation of *Thalaba* is quite obvious; and the influence of Southey's general method and style still prevails through *Alastor,* the *Revolt of Islam*, and *Prometheus Unbound.* With Keats the dependence becomes much less visible; still the idea of choosing vast mythological subjects for poetic treatment would hardly have occurred to him, even after Spenser's example, had not the Laureate led the way in his now forgotten epics.

It is remarkable to what an extent the great literary productivity of the Regency seems connected with the diversion into poetry and fiction of genius, which in other circumstances might have been applied to practical life. Scott had in him the making of a soldier-statesman like Wellington; within the limitations assigned by fate to his ambition, he cared chiefly for making himself a great landed proprietor. Byron, never a true literary artist, might well have become another Fox; indeed, the impression made on Brougham, who cut up his juvenile verses in the *Edinburgh,* was that the young lord "had better give up poetry and apply his talents, which were considerable, to better account." At Oxford Shelley devoted himself to physical science, and, after his expulsion,

to political agitation; while his tragic death was connected with a very businesslike scheme for establishing steam-communication between Genoa and Leghorn. Keats "impressed all his schoolfellows with a conviction of his future greatness, 'but rather in a military or some such active sphere of life than in the peaceful arena of literature.'"[1] Finally Landor, who for convenience may be included in the list, is called by De Quincey "a spirit built by nature to animate a leader in storms, a martyr, a national reformer, an arch-rebel, whom the accidents of education have turned into a contemplative recluse."[2]

There seems, then, some reason for connecting the literary splendour of the Regency and the first years of George IV. with the political stagnation and general reactionariness of the period. So long as the old King remained in power there were hopes that his successor would inaugurate a more Liberal system. The Regent's Ministers were more opposed to all reform than his father's had been, and the victory over Napoleon seemed to give Toryism a new lease of life. Then the progressists transferred their allegiance to the Princess Charlotte, and with her death in 1817 all hope expired. But Liberty, that "eternal spirit of the chainless mind," is, as Byron sang, "brightest in dungeons"; and the ideals that replace her possession burn most intensely in the darkest night. English literature has produced few greater works than some that appeared from 1814 to 1822 (the year when Canning took the helm), more especially during the last five

[1] Lord Houghton, *Life and Letters of Keats*, pp. 5-6.
[2] De Quincey, *Works*, vol. viii., p. 286.

years of the period—that is, the quinquennium following the Princess Charlotte's death. Jane Austen, finding her pen once more, adds three other masterpieces to the three left so long unpublished. Scott writes the most and the best of his novels. Byron, Shelley, Keats produce all that puts them in the first rank of poets. Note also that the very best of Byron's and Shelley's work—the fourth Canto of *Childe Harold, Manfred, Cain,* the *Vision of Judgment*, and the first Cantos of *Don Juan,* of the one, the *Cenci* and the great lyrics of the other—belong to 1818–1822; as also do Keats's most perfect things. I may add that Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria,* containing his finest extant literary criticism, appeared in 1817; and that the most brilliant of Lamb's and Hazlitt's essays belong also to the first decade of the Peace.

Among those who form this galaxy of genius some were not revolutionists. Still it seems likely that for them also the stagnation and gloom of politics gave an unwonted interest and zest to pure literature, such as it never afterwards possessed.

It may be urged that, apart from any political revival, the tragic deaths of Keats, Shelley, and Byron, followed by Scott's no less tragic bankruptcy, sufficiently account for the rapid literary decline of the twenties. And this would be true were those catastrophes just what they are commonly held to be, so many deplorable accidents. But, except in the case of Keats, they are something more, they are the revenges of reality on genius estranged from its service. What has been said of the somewhat similar fatalities so numerous at this

time among the statesmen also applies in some degree to the poets, gifted as these were with the same pushing, speculative, experimental temper. All might have said of themselves, with the same confidence as Shelley, "I always go on until I am stopped, and I never am stopped."[1] They were stopped by something still more imperious than themselves—by the physical and social forces to which their wills were not adjusted.

With the disappearance of her great poets from the scene we reach a turning-point in the intellectual history of England which, both from its importance and from the wealth of material to be discussed, makes it advisable to begin a new chapter.

[1] "Hasty, peremptory, and intolerant of contradiction" is the character Scott gives of himself under the person of Colonel Mannering. (*Guy Mannering*, chap. xvii.)

Chapter V.

DE REPUBLICA

With the eclipse of imaginative idealism involved in the dawn of a new political system, English literature becomes possessed by another idealism of a more practical kind, fed on the lessons of history and directed towards the reformation of government. The names that first engage our attention belong to historians who were also politicians—Hallam, Macaulay, Carlyle. Let us glance at their respective attitudes towards the great interests of the age.

Hallam's *Constitutional History* maintains the old Whig point of view against both Tories and Radicals. Macaulay, then an advanced Liberal, in reviewing it, as before in his Essay on Milton, vindicates the revolutionary Cromwellian side, anticipating Carlyle by twenty years. Earlier still he had passionately defended Athenian democracy against Mitford, here equally anticipating Grote. He prophesies the honour that will be paid to Machiavelli in a liberated Italy. Shelley, whose genius he could scarcely have appreciated, is extolled in the Essay on Bunyan as potentially the greatest of modern poets, nominally for qualities of which he showed no trace, but really, we must suppose, from sympathy with his political and religious theories.

Carlyle had no aptitude for literary criticism, nor any love of artistic beauty for its own sake; as a judge of poetry he can compare even less than Macaulay with Coleridge, Lamb, and Hazlitt. Yet many of his best years were devoted to doing thoroughly what William Taylor had done imperfectly—to making German literature known in England. What he appreciated was, as Goethe observed, its intellectual and moral substance rather than its form; what one may call, using a more modern term, the application of ideas to life, the desire to remove obsolete institutions, combined with the fullest recognition of their value in past ages, and of the necessity for replacing them with something more solid than a simple negation. Whether Carlyle ever saw into the genial pedantry of German life, the systematic schooling and drill of it all, interspersed with so much frolicsome enjoyment, is not clear; but he did much to remove the prevalent English conception of the Germans, as mystical dreamers or romantic sentimentalists, inherited from the first revolutionary period.

Carlyle had convinced himself early in life that the religious beliefs of his countrymen were what he called superstition. But it would seem that his attitude in this respect owed nothing to German thought; it was determined by the tradition of eighteenth-century Rationalism, by reading Voltaire and Gibbon. If anything, Germany taught him to revere the religious beliefs of the past as symbols of an eternal, indefinable reality. Thus to the outer world he appeared as a mystic, only a few intimate friends being permitted to know what abysmal negations his cloudy phraseology

concealed. Coleridge held, at bottom, much the same views, but with an ever-increasing tendency to pass off the dogma and ritual of Anglicanism, which Carlyle hated and despised, as their adequate expression. On the other hand, he had made himself acquainted, when a young man at Göttingen, with some important results of German Biblical criticism most subversive of Anglican orthodoxy as then understood ; and these he communicated to his friends in conversation, or jotted them down in the margins of his favourite English seventeenth-century divines.

Long before the great poet's opinions were made known, Herbert Marsh, afterwards Bishop of Peterborough, had translated the work of Michaelis, a Göttingen professor, on the Gospels, adopting, with some formal reservations, the principles of an exegesis really incompatible with the dogma of Scriptural infallibility. Napoleon's Continental blockade seems to have been more effective in keeping German ideas out of England than in keeping English goods out of Germany ; but with the return of peace intellectual intercourse was resumed, and English students once more went to receive instruction at Göttingen from professors who had the recommendation of being fellow-subjects of King George. There the veteran rationalist Eichhorn still taught, and he gave them his opinion of some Biblical legends in language of unmistakable significance. In 1825 young Thirlwall, afterwards Bishop of St. David's, translated Schleiermacher's *Introduction to St. Luke,* with a Preface from his own pen implying that the inspiration of the Gospels, whatever else it meant,

certainly did not guarantee their historical accuracy.

Soon afterwards Thirlwall, with the co-operation of Julius Hare, the future Archdeacon, translated Niebuhr's Roman History ; and at the same time Wolf's *Prolegomena to Homer,* another work of disintegrating criticism, began to attract the attention of English scholars. From their connection with such universally interesting subjects the researches of Niebuhr and Wolf were sure to command attention in this country ; while their method of using popular ballad-poetry as a key to the origin of ancient history and literature brought them into living contact with the fashionable romanticism of the day.

The two great German critics were well aware that their methods might be applied with no less success to Hebrew tradition than to Homer and Livy ; but they left the application to be made by others. An English poet and scholar, afterwards, as Dean Milman, the picturesque historian of Latin Christianity, without any intention of discrediting the early Biblical narratives, retold them, in what he called a *History of the Jews,* in a style of such rhetorical romanticism as to give the impression that he regarded them as standing on the same level with other Oriental traditions, besides altogether refusing to make the divine authority responsible for the savage deeds of ancient Israel. Religious opinion was not ripe for such treatment ; the book raised a storm ; and the series in which it was issued had to be discontinued.

During the period covered by this and the

preceding chapter English physical science has no great discoveries to show. The old stars continue to shine, but with a greatly diminished lustre ; the new stars are still far below their meridian splendour. This interval of obscurity may be accidental ; it may also be connected in some way, not yet understood, first with the unparalleled development of imaginative literature during the Regency, then with the wave of religious excitement marked by Edward Irving's preaching, or finally with the new devotion to political philosophy, critical or constructive, from which we started, and to which we must now return.

All the political thought of the time worth remembering is contained in the writings of three Benthamites—James Mill, Ricardo, and John Austin. For intellectual power and for inspiring genius the first place among these belongs to Mill ; but the greatest single contribution to positive knowledge, and that which was also of greatest practical importance, belongs to Ricardo. His position also clearly indicates the distinction between the philosophical and the popular Radicalism of the age.

Popular Radicalism found its ablest representative in Cobbett. This incomparable journalist has already been mentioned in connection with the revived interest in Paine's freethought writings. But his chief importance is, of course, purely political. Persistently devoted to the poor, and at the same time courting notoriety for himself, he carried on an implacable war against the Government during the Regency and after, not particularly affected, as would seem, by Canning's advent

to power. A steady advocate of Catholic Emancipation and of Free Trade in corn—less perhaps from any enthusiasm for those measures than because the high Tories hated them—he looked on the heavy load of taxation under which England reeled as the chief if not the sole cause of her woes. If bread was dear, the burdens under which the land groaned were responsible for its high price. The remedy was Parliamentary Reform. Let all taxpayers have a share in the representation proportionate to their numbers, and an end will be put to that iniquitous system by which the industrious classes are pillaged in order that fundholders, jobbers, and sinecurists may flourish in idleness.

Cobbett did not stand alone in believing that taxes, as distinct from corn-duties, raised the price of bread, or at least somehow obliged the landlords and farmers to raise it. What overthrew this view was the theory of Rent, first discovered in 1777 by Dr. Anderson, then forgotten, and simultaneously rediscovered by Malthus and West in 1815. At once adopted by Ricardo, it has since become exclusively associated with his name, for the excellent reason that he alone seized its full implications and made it the foundation of a complete theory of exchange. The theory says that rent means the surplus yielded by any land over the worst land in cultivation, and that it tends to increase with the increasing pressure of population on the means of subsistence, involving as this does the putting of ever poorer soils under the plough, or, what comes to the same thing, the application of more capital with diminishing returns to the same soil. Hence it follows that rent goes entirely

into the pocket of the landlord, and amounts to a tax levied by him on the rest of the community; while the unrestricted importation of foreign corn tends to lower his rents by throwing the worst soils out of cultivation, and its exclusion to raise them by allowing the process of extending cultivation to go on. Therefore the landowner is more interested in Protection than the manufacturers are, his advantage being perpetual, while theirs is soon reduced to zero by the pressure of capital into the protected industries.

Ricardo also showed that, *cæteris paribus*, profits rise as the cost of labour falls, and that this falls when the labourer's food costs less. Hence dearer bread means higher wages and less profits: the landlord's gain is the capitalist's loss. If the labourers multiply up to the limit of subsistence, as Ricardo thought they would, Free Trade in corn only adds to their numbers, not to their wealth; if in any way the demand for work can be restricted, they reap the whole benefit of cheaper food. Thus Protection for agriculture never favours their interest, and may be directly opposed to it. The landlord then must expect to see his privileges threatened by a combination of capitalists and working-men.

Ricardo's principles were pregnant with a future agitation, undreamed of by himself, for putting an end to that monopoly of the land which enables its owners to enrich themselves at the expense of the community by taking advantage of the pressure of population on the means of subsistence. Economists might still defend the private ownership of land on grounds of expediency. But he who takes

that ground must surrender the right to describe land-nationalisation as robbery. And an appeal to expediency does not act on public opinion with anything like the same force as an appeal to justice.

Another principle of Ricardo's is that manufactured articles of which the supply can be increased without limit exchange for one another in the ratio of their cost of production, which in the last analysis is determined by the amount of labour they embody. And as the theory of rent has been used to justify land-nationalisation, so also the Ricardian theory of value has been used by socialistic economists to justify their demand that the whole produce of labour should belong to the wage-earners, by whose labour it has been created.

Finally, Ricardo has shown that by a self-adjusting machinery the precious metals, considered as instruments of exchange, tend to diffuse themselves over the whole trading world in such a way that the imports of any particular country must ultimately balance its exports. For the excess of imports, if any, being paid for in bullion, prices at home are lowered by the scarcity of money, and prices abroad are raised by its abundance, until the importing country is obliged by the resulting dearness of commodities in the rest of the world to contract its purchases; while at the same time other countries are induced by the increasing cheapness of its commodities to buy more of them, paying in bullion until the normal balance is restored. Thus, for all who could master Ricardo's theory of foreign exchanges, was dispelled the

illusion, suggested by a temporary excess of imports over exports, that the country was living on its capital, and incurring the same liability to ruin as an individual who finds himself in a similar predicament.

Ricardo wrote his *Political Economy* at the suggestion of James Mill, the managing head of the Utilitarian school, by all of whom its principles were immediately adopted. Mill himself had made a great reputation by his *History of British India,* which also belongs to the early years of the Peace. It contains a rather contemptuous appreciation of ancient Hindoo mythology and literature, which is an implicit protest of Hellenism against Oriental unreason, then as now the object of much romanticist infatuation. The author's marked admiration for the French adventurers who at one time disputed with us the empire of the Mogul seems to show that leaning to France so characteristic of Scotch rationalism. But the most distinct moral of the whole work is conveyed in its exhibition of the wrongs that can be inflicted on a helpless people by a small group of irresponsible and ill-informed rulers. James Mill repudiated the idea of conferring representative institutions on India, looking rather, as we must suppose, to the growth of an enlightened public opinion in England for a redress of her grievances. With England herself, however, the case was very different. Here the people were fit for a widely extended suffrage, and ought to get it as their only safeguard against the spoliation and oppression which government by a small minority entails.

According to James Mill, the object of government is "to secure to every man the greatest possible quantity of the produce of his labour"; and its justification is the admitted fact that the strong possess themselves of what belongs to the weak whenever they can do so with impunity. Now, granting this to be true of men in general, it must be true in particular of the men to whom government is confided. They will use their delegated authority to satisfy their appetites; and, in order to do this with safety to themselves, they will not cease to extend it until they have reduced the people under their dominion to a state of abject slavery. For this difficulty there is only one solution — the establishment of a representative democracy, with short Parliaments elected by popular constituencies. The stringent responsibilities of the governing minority will prevent them from abusing their power; an almost complete identity of their interest with the interest of the whole community will prevent the controlling majority from abusing *theirs*.

Mill's reasoning is *a priori*, and, like all *a priori* reasoning, it is based on a limited experience—in this instance the experience of old Greek city life as interpreted by Plato and Aristotle, with which his classical studies had long familiarised him, supplemented at a later period by the history of India. His absolute monarch is a Greek tyrant or a Nawab; his aristocracy an oligarchic Athenian club. A very slight extension of the same reasoning, or of the same reading, would have furnished him with equally strong arguments to the effect that an uncontrolled majority of poor voters would

use their power to plunder the rich minority, thereby bringing about the economic ruin of the community.

Macaulay, who wrote a crushing refutation of Mill's *Essay on Government,* did not fail to press this last consideration. On that occasion he only used it as an *argumentum ad hominem.* But subsequently, in his private criticism on Jefferson's legislation, and in his public attack on the People's Charter, he denounced universal suffrage as something that would infallibly lead to confiscation. Yet for those gloomy vaticinations he had none but *a priori* reasons to offer; and it was precisely for applying the *a priori* method to politics that he so severely condemned James Mill. At bottom, logical preferences had very little to do with the controversy. Mill hated the Whigs as obstructive moderates; and Macaulay attacked him with bitterness, both as an enemy of Sir James Mackintosh and as a Radical fanatic who was endangering the prospects of Whig reform by advocating an extreme democratic solution of the electoral problem. Their views differed less in reality than in appearance. In politics Macaulay was half a Benthamite, and in morals all a hedonist; while Mill would have been satisfied with a Reform Bill giving the franchise to every man with £100 a year.[1]

In philosophy the elder Mill stood at the farthest remove from that mediæval scholasticism with which he was rather invidiously identified by his young reviewer. His work on Mind, the most important contribution to British metaphysics since Brown's

[1] Denis le Marchant, *Memoir of Earl Spencer,* p. 420.

treatise *On Cause and Effect*, developes and strengthens the traditional empiricism of Locke and Hume by definitely grafting it on the psychological theory of Association. He thus furnished the Benthamites with a system of thought to pit against the revived and Germanised Platonism which Coleridge had recently recommended to Lord Liverpool as the appropriate philosophy of Toryism.[1] And no doubt Mill's *Analysis* went far to undermine the Anglican dogmatism which Coleridge ostensibly supported in the *Friend*. Yet its interest is more didactic than speculative. Mill's object is to show how the very nature of mind, rightly understood, reveals an unlimited capacity for receiving new modifications and impulses from the teacher's art. Consciousness consists of trains of impressions and ideas whose course is determined by the relative frequency with which their external excitements are presented in contiguity with one another, and the ardour of emotion under which their union is sealed. Thus he who has unravelled and reconstructed the network of Contiguous Association holds in his hands all the threads of which true belief and right action consist. And at the same stroke the utilitarian critic of traditional dogmas claiming a natural or mystical self-evidence, is enabled to strip them of their glamour by an analysis of the casual experiences and passions under which they were formed.

A programme of reform stood ready, involving a considerable amount of new legislation; and it

[1] Yonge, *Life of Lord Liverpool*, vol. ii., pp. 300 *sqq*.

was agreed that, as a preliminary, a large popular element must be introduced into the government of England. But what exactly government and legislation meant had not yet been clearly explained. This office was performed by John Austin, next to Mill and Ricardo the most powerful Benthamite thinker of the period. In a course of lectures delivered at University College, London, in 1828 and the following years, he clearly distinguished positive law, as the command of a superior enforced by penalties, from the moral law, which is a matter of individual conscience or opinion, and from laws of nature, which are laws only in a metaphorical sense. In this way such notions as divine right and natural right were quietly and respectfully, but completely eliminated from the province of jurisprudence, while the undivided authority of the State found itself exalted to a position of autocratism before unknown. According to Austin, in every independent community positive law, which is the only real law, emanates from a power acknowledging no superior and subject to no external restraint. Governments fall into two fundamental classes according as this power is exercised by one or by more than one person. What we call a limited monarchy is really an aristocracy where one of the aristocrats holds a position of peculiar prominence and dignity. But all government, whether in the hands of one or of many, is essentially absolute, since there can be no legal restraint on that which is the sole source of law, and which cannot be resisted except at the cost of splitting the community into two by civil war. Nor is this fundamental absoluteness interfered with by the

current division into the legislative, the executive, and the judicial powers. All three are concerned in making and enforcing the laws, and all are but different organs and creatures of the same ubiquitous, omnipotent authority.

Austin gives the name of "Sovereignty" to this ultimate power of issuing unquestionable orders, enforced by penalties fixed and dealt out at the pleasure of its holders; and the persons holding it he calls "the Sovereign." Thus the emotions of awe and reverence traditionally associated with a personal ruler are transferred at a stroke to the impersonal body of which the titular king constituted at that time a part of continually diminishing importance.

The idea of Sovereignty was not new, being in fact revived from the political philosophy of Hobbes. But in practice it was associated, as Hobbes meant that it should be associated, with the institution of a hereditary despotism; and Locke, as the theorist of Constitutional Government, had set against it the idea of an indefeasible social contract, whereby each individual surrendered only so much of his natural rights as was needed to protect the much greater portion still reserved as his inviolable possession. The novelty was to convert that armed and irresistible champion whom Hobbes had imaged in the frontispiece of his *Leviathan* into an instrument of innovating and liberal legislation.

In defining the notion of Sovereignty, Austin professed to be merely analysing the fundamental conditions of all civilised government as experience exhibits them in actual operation, disencumbered of the fictions under which they are habitually

concealed; nor, indeed, with his discursive, dilatory, over-scrupulous intellectual habits, was he the man to set up irresponsible autocracy as an ideal where it did not already exist. But he had begun life as a soldier; and it may well be that familiarity with the rules of military discipline led him to reflect on their ultimate source and sanction. A commanding officer can have no other authority than what he receives from the civil government, which must therefore possess an even more peremptory claim on the obedience of its subjects than belongs to an agent clothed with merely delegated rights.

It has been said that the only ruler exactly answering to the description of Austin's Sovereign was the tyrant of a Greek city-state. He might have answered that before the powers of government could be seized and abused by a great criminal they must have already existed and been employed for more tolerable ends. To have a giant's strength is not necessarily to use it like a giant.

Definitions are often, if not always, postulates. A point of view is a practical direction, and the more so the more one-sided it is. Mackintosh had said that government was organised liberty. In practice this ideal worked out as organised license and impotence. The reformers could unpack their hearts with words and fall a-cursing like very drabs, but they could hardly put a single good measure on the Statute-book. What England wanted was not more liberty—except in religion—but better government; or, rather, the creation of a new machinery for bringing the inherent powers of government into play. Such a machinery was first supplied by Parliamentary Reform.

Chapter VI.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

"England," said Disraeli, "does not love coalitions." If she does not love them, she had, under the unreformed Parliament, very frequently to put up with them. It was no easy matter to get and keep together a ministerial majority when there could be no appeal to a coherent body of opinion in the country; accordingly, the head of the Government often had, in the common phrase, to strengthen his position by giving his opponents a share of office. Such bargains involved a certain sacrifice of principle in one of the parties concerned, and most frequently in both; nor were the qualities most in demand a sure guarantee of administrative efficiency. Eloquence and readiness in debate secured more than their fair share in the distribution of prizes, on account of the weight carried by those gifts in a sovereign assembly whose members were free to indulge their personal predilections irrespective of any responsibility to their electors or to the country at large. It has been supposed that the decline in Parliamentary oratory after the Reform Act corresponded to a decline in the ability of the speakers, due to the fact that young men of genius had not the same facilities for entering on a political career when the number of pocket or purchasable boroughs at the disposal of the party chiefs was so reduced as to be no longer available for the purpose

of introducing every desirable candidate for office into public life. It is not clear, however, that Parliamentary ability, as measured by more permanent standards, has declined at all; and the decline in eloquence is amply accounted for by another cause. There has not been the same supply, for the good reason that there has not been the same demand. Eloquence has not the same value in a House where party-leaders, at the head of solid majorities, are engaged in pushing useful measures through as in a House where it matters less what Bills are carried than what applause is won.

Whatever its advantages as a means for introducing young men to public life, the system of Parliamentary patronage had the unquestionable drawback of exposing their political integrity to serious temptations—to the temptation, in the first instance, of enlisting under the banner of the magnate who offered them a seat, and to the temptation afterwards of deserting to the side of the Minister who could make them independent of his support. Even with an assured Parliamentary position, a statesman who stood outside the aristocratic ring was obliged, in default of popular support, to make his way by more or less discreditable intrigues, or by unworthy concessions to royal demands.

I have shown in the earlier chapters of this work to what the power of the Crown amounted, and to what impotence it reduced the machinery of government, whether considered as an instrument of order or of progress.[1] The titular Sovereign, so far from

[1] *Supra*, pp. 4, 53, 74, 76, and 78.

giving concentrated energy to the will of the Sovereign in Austin's sense, acted as a drag on its movements in every direction. At last the evil corrected itself. As royalty sank into deeper and deeper contempt, Liberal opinion organised itself spontaneously under leaders drawn from the Tory ranks, and took in hand, to begin with, the destruction of the least defensible abuses. But even the mighty genius and dauntless will of Canning proved unequal to the task of safely steering a rotten bark down a torrent beset with such rocks and shoals. A few weeks after a Bill for relaxing the restrictions on the importation of foreign corn had been wrecked in the Lords, through the blundering of his own supporters, the great statesman perished by disease, as he might have perished by the headsman's stroke under a Tudor king. His Coalition Cabinet struggled on for five months, with the pitiful Goderich as its nominal head. Under it the guns went off of themselves at Navarino, putting an end at once to the tyranny of the Turks in Greece and to the tyranny of the Holy Alliance in Europe. Then came the still feebler Ministry of Wellington and Peel. Called to office as defenders of Church privileges, they signally betrayed their trust.

Up till then dissenters from the Established Church had been formally excluded from holding political offices in England, besides being subjected to sundry other disabilities by what were known as the Test and Corporation Acts. All who wished to evade the law could do so with impunity by receiving the Sacrament according to the Anglican ritual; and Protestant Nonconformists habitually had recourse to this subterfuge. But the obligation was

felt as a stigma; and the value of its repeal in 1828 on the motion of a young Whig, the celebrated Lord John Russell, with the consent of the Ministry, is evinced by Lord Eldon's passionate protest against such a dereliction of duty on the part of the Administration, the Lords, and the Bishops.

Next year Wellington and Peel not only conceded Catholic Emancipation, but themselves introduced and passed it as a Government measure. In the circumstances no other course was open to them; nevertheless, they and their party remained profoundly discredited by the surrender. What had so long been refused to reason was now avowedly granted to the threat of rebellion—an indication of the method on which future reformers might most safely rely for the satisfaction of their demands. Moreover, a most unfavourable contrast suggested itself between the political morality of the Whigs, who had submitted to so many years' exclusion from office rather than sacrifice their principles, and the political morality of the Tories, who sacrificed *their* principles to prolong their twenty years' tenure of office by some uncertain and inglorious months. Most degraded of all was the attitude of the faithless old voluptuary on the throne, who, false to his duty as a son and false to his pledges as a lover, now maundered feebly about the example of his revered father and the obligations of his Coronation oath.

If George IV. made the monarchy contemptible, his brother and successor made it ridiculous. William IV., a sailor prince, had the traditional manners of a boatswain on shore, still more accentuated by what seemed a touch of hereditary

insanity. A lover of popularity rather than of power, he had just character enough to bring a reforming Ministry into office, and not enough to defeat, although he disliked, the measure by which they revolutionised the Constitution and reduced the power of the Crown to a cipher.

With the new reign came a General Election. It was held under the shadow of that Revolution which overthrew the restored Bourbon monarchy and made the French once more a free people. Even with the very limited share of power given to the popular element by the Charter of 1814, Charles X.'s Ministers were defeated in the Chamber of Deputies by a majority of forty; and, on an appeal to the country, the victory of the Opposition received a decisive confirmation. The King replied by three Decrees, dissolving the new Chamber, altering the Constitution, and destroying the liberty of the Press. Then the people of Paris rose in arms, defeated the half-hearted troops sent to put them down, and in three days overthrew the government of priests and nobles imposed on them by the Allies in 1814. The Monarchy was provisionally maintained; but Charles X.'s place was taken by an ostentatiously *bourgeois* King, who, like William IV., walked about the streets alone with an umbrella under his arm, responding affably to the salutations of the passers-by.

The news of the glorious days of July excited the wildest enthusiasm in England and gave a decisive impulse to the cause of Parliamentary Reform at the elections then in progress.[1] It is worthy of remark

[1] Harriet Martineau, *Thirty Years' Peace,* vol. ii., p. 383.

that, although Canning hated reform, the forces he had set in motion were entirely favourable to its advance. His pro-nationalist policy broke up the Tory party and created a group of statesmen who were prepared to carry that coalition with the Whigs which he had begun to the length of absolute coalescence. By winning over France to the Greek cause he had separated her government from the German despotisms, and so left it a helpless prey to the Revolution. Even his South American policy, apart from the countenance it gave to republicanism, told accidentally in the same direction. For the new openings it afforded to our trade, by stimulating the wildest speculation, caused a vast loss of capital and brought about that terrible commercial crisis in which, among other catastrophes, Scott's whole fortune was engulfed. This, again, led to a long-continued period of distress, extended over the whole country, and still further aggravated by the bad harvest of 1829. As usual, the Government was made responsible, the more so as its policy of Free Trade, inherited from Canning, had to bear the blame of the prevalent industrial stagnation. Even Catholic Emancipation told in favour of the Reformers. For the settlement of the question gave them back the alienated affections of the English middle class, whose bigotry made them unwilling to put in power a party pledged to carry that detested measure. As Macaulay observes, with its passage "the solitary link of sympathy which attached the people to the Tories was broken; the cry of 'No Popery' could no longer be opposed to the cry of 'Reform.'"[1]

[1] *Miscellaneous Writings, Speeches, and Poems,* vol. ii., p. 430.

Liberalism had not a majority in the new Parliament, but the Ministerialists lost so many seats, and so many of the Tories returned were bitterly hostile to Wellington and Peel as apostates from Protestantism, that their position proved untenable, especially after the Duke had alienated the most moderate Reformers by a declaration of his belief in the unsurpassable perfection of the English Constitution, made without consulting his colleagues, of whom some would have gladly coalesced with the Canningites on the basis of a compromise with the popular demands. Thus disunited and unsupported, his Ministry fell before an adverse vote within a fortnight after Parliament met.

These details are important because they show that the constitution Wellington pronounced ideally perfect had ended by simply making it impossible for the King's Government to be carried on. Not merely a certain number of boroughs, but the whole system was rotten. A really strong aristocratic system might have resisted popular clamour with success; but such a system was incompatible with the power of the Crown on the one hand, and of the popular element in the House of Commons on the other—forces by which the nobles were permanently split into two factions, appealing to one or other of them for support. The sole remedy was to transfer sovereignty from this shifting chaos to some one part of the community sufficiently powerful and homogeneous to outweigh all the other parts put together, or at least any combination of parts ever likely to be formed in opposition to its will.

Such a body lay ready to hand in the middle classes of England, understanding by that name the whole mass of citizens who were neither obliged to maintain themselves by manual labour nor enabled to live in idleness on inherited property. In numbers a small minority of the whole people, they possessed by far the largest share of its accumulated wealth and educated intelligence, with probably on an average more than their proportionate share of its morality—advantages still further enhanced by the continual accession to their ranks of the best and ablest men from the working classes, and of those who were compelled by narrow means to descend from the aristocracy and to seek for a living in the professions. With very few exceptions, all that makes England great owed its origin to members of this class; and she would have been far richer in the elements of national well-being had not its development been repressed by the superincumbent weight of a territorial oligarchy whose acres were broader than their minds.

The leading Reformers agreed in thinking that the object of a great readjustment of the representation should be to place supreme power in the hands of the middle class. In advocating a wide popular suffrage with or without a small property qualification, James Mill, an advanced Radical, argued that the working-men electors would be guided by "the intelligence of that virtuous rank who come the most immediately in contact with them.....to whom they fly for advice and assistance in all their numerous difficulties.....to whom their children look up as models for imitation, whose

opinions they hear daily repeated and account it their honour to adopt."[1] And he had no doubt that the middle class was "that portion of the community of which, if the basis of Representation were ever so far extended, the opinion would ultimately decide." Brougham also—no Radical, but a conservative Whig—identifies the people of England with the middle classes, "the genuine depositaries of sober, rational, intelligent, and honest English feeling, looked up to by the populace as their kind and natural protectors."[2]

Now it was just because the middle classes were so representative of the people, so wealthy and so intelligent, that some thoughtful and far-sighted English statesmen dreaded their advent to power. They saw that the House of Commons had become, in Canning's words, "the preponderant element of the Constitution." But "if it were to add to its real active governing influence such an exclusively popular character.....as would arise from the consciousness that it was the immediately deputed agent for the whole people and the exclusive organ of their will, the House of Commons, instead of enjoying one-third part of the power of the State, would in a little while absorb the whole." Neither the House of Lords nor the Crown could "presume to counteract the supreme authority of the nation assembled" in Parliament, with the result that we should risk losing "that equality and co-ordination of powers among the three branches of our present Constitution in which its beauty, its strength, its

[1] *Essay on Government,* p. 32.
[2] *Speeches,* vol. ii., pp. 606–11.

stability, and the happiness of those who live under it consist."[1]

So, with the prescience of genius, spoke Canning in 1822; and such doubtless was the view taken by many brought up, like young Gladstone, "under the shadow of his great name."

There was this much truth in the argument for the supreme excellence of our balanced Constitution, that a weak and even rotten Government had favoured the growth of individual enterprise and genius in England for the last two generations. But then that very development had itself created a demand for reforms which only a strong Government could carry through. The most brilliant of the newly-elected Whig members, a thoroughly middle-class man, who had won his seat—a pocket borough of Lord Lansdowne's—by attacking Bentham while himself a Benthamite as regards legal reform, the Edinburgh reviewer Macaulay, argued very truly that the value of a Legislature ought not to be estimated by the general prosperity of the country, but by the way in which its own proper work of legislation was done; and that, judged by that standard, the unreformed Parliament deserved the severest condemnation, the civil and criminal laws of England being as much a disgrace to her rulers as her material prosperity was a glory to the people.[2] And Brougham, also in law a pupil of Bentham, speaking for the Whig Ministry, declares that they "seek the support" of the middle classes, "by salutary reforms not merely in the representation, but in all the branches of our

[1] Canning, *Speeches*, vol. iv., pp. 354–56.
[2] *Miscellaneous Writings and Speeches*, ii., 408.

financial, our commercial, and our legal polity."[1]

The real chief of the fallen Ministry, now Sir Robert Peel, had indeed signalised his tenure of office by some modification of the sanguinary penal statutes denounced by Macaulay, and had greatly added to public security by the creation of an efficient police. But a truly representative Parliament would have dealt with the penal laws much sooner and much more thoroughly; and the new constabulary would have been more popular had they not been identified with the machinery of aristocratic oppression. There are not many sadder things in English history than that Peel, himself sprung from the middle class, and, like Pitt and Canning, born to guide it on the path of progress, should have been separated by fate from his natural supporters, and made illustrious by deserting the positions he had been retained to defend.

The place left vacant by the collapse of Wellington's forlorn Administration was filled, in fact if not in name, by a Coalition Cabinet, a combination of Whigs and Canningites under the lead of Fox's most dignified follower, Earl Grey. Although chosen to carry out the will of the middle class, it was exceptionally aristocratic in constitution. Its only middle-class member, and also by far the ablest, Brougham, sat in the House of Lords as Chancellor. The majority of his colleagues were hereditary peers, and the Ministers who sat in the Commons were mostly lords or the sons of lords.

[1] *Speeches*, ii. 601.

Their views on Reform differed widely, but the most aristocratic were not the least advanced. The scheme ultimately agreed on was a compromise based on the principle of making the smallest change in existing institutions consistent with the nearly complete admission of the middle class to political power. For innovating purposes a more sweeping measure might have proved less effectual. It seems unlikely that Household Suffrage, vote by ballot, shorter Parliaments, or even a closer adjustment of representation to population, would have made the transfer of sovereignty more absolute ; a considerable enfranchisement of working men might even have weakened the people by dividing them against themselves and limiting their choice to candidates rich enough to contest very large constituencies. Lord Grey assured the King that his Bill was really aristocratic ; and it was so in the sense of leaving the highest class a practical monopoly of administrative power ; but in all probability any manipulation of the electorate would have had the same effect. What it did do was to institute popular sovereignty (in Austin's sense), and to destroy the power of the Crown ; but the Prime Minister, as a theoretical Republican, would view this revolution without alarm.

The first Reform Bill passed the second reading by a majority of only one, and was wrecked by an amendment in Committee. An immediate dissolution gave the country, imperfectly represented as it was, the opportunity for an unequivocal expression of its opinion. Of eighty-two English county members seventy-six were returned pledged to support the Bill, as were also all the representatives

of the cities and the great towns. In the new House the second reading of the second Reform Bill passed by a majority of 136. The Lords threw it out by a majority composed of Bishops and of peers created since the French Revolution. Riots occurred in various parts of the country, and there was some talk of refusing to pay taxes. Wellington and Peel had yielded Catholic Emancipation to avoid civil war in Ireland; yet they countenanced a policy of resistance to the will of the people in England at the risk of the same calamity, and with the certainty of ultimate failure. When the Bill passed the Commons a second time—on this occasion by a majority of two to one—Peel still advised the Lords to throw it out, his avowed object being to discourage future attempts in the same direction, by making the innovator's task as difficult and repulsive as possible.[1] This time, however, they agreed to the second reading, but soon afterwards passed a wrecking amendment in Committee. On the King's refusal to overcome their resistance by a sweeping creation of peers, the Whig Ministers resigned, and Wellington accepted office on the understanding that he was to introduce a new measure of Reform on rather more moderate lines; but Peel, whose co-operation he invited, would not be a party to any such disreputable scheme for saving the dignity of the King and the Upper House. The two chiefs had different and conflicting standards of honour. The Duke, after declaring against any sort of constitutional change as bad in itself, was ready to pocket

[1] Parker, *Sir Robert Peel,* vol. ii., p. 201.

his principles for the convenience of his royal master; Sir Robert, as a party leader, objected to making himself and his followers responsible for a disturbance in existing arrangements which they had publicly denounced as inexpedient and unjust.

The advanced Liberal leaders were confident that, if it came to a trial of strength, the people would win, as they had won in Paris and Brussels. But they dreaded the consequences of victory. It would mean the establishment of pure democracy, for which, in their opinion, the country was not ripe. At this juncture Francis Place, a Radical tailor of high organising ability, and, for practical purposes, the wire-puller of the Benthamite party, hit on an effective scheme for baffling the Court intrigues by which William IV., under the influence, as was believed, of his German consort, had been won away from the popular cause. On Sunday, May 13th, 1832, he placarded the walls of London with bills containing merely the words: "To stop the Duke, go for gold." The result was a run on the Bank which lasted a week. But long before the week was over the placards had done their work; for on Tuesday the King had sent for Earl Grey, and on Friday permission had been obtained to create as many peers as were necessary to pass the Bill. The threat sufficed to bring the Lords to their senses, and on June 4th the third reading was carried by 106 to 22.[1]

In one important respect the measure that became law differed from the original plan. The county

[1] Graham Wallas, *Life of Francis Place*, pp. 305–10.

franchise, which in the first Bill had been restricted to forty-shilling freeholders, was extended, against the will of the Government, to copyholders, leaseholders, and tenants-at-will paying £50 a year. This change introduced a class of voters very much under the influence of the landowners; and, as the number of county members was simultaneously increased from 94 to 159, the landed interest obtained a great accession of strength, just at a time when the total abolition of the Corn Laws had become a leading item in the Radical programme.

Events soon showed that the Reform Bill had done precisely what was expected from it by friends and foes alike. A legislative machine had been created capable of carrying the will of the middle classes into effect. Twenty years of Parliamentary agitation had been needed to destroy such an indefensible iniquity as the slave trade. In the very first session of the Reformed Parliament West Indian slavery, a less unquestionable evil, was abolished without resistance. The work of law reform was greatly accelerated. Those sanguinary penal statutes mentioned by Macaulay as an accompaniment of the rotten-borough system were rapidly repealed; and "since 1838 no person has been hanged in England for any offence other than murder."[1] After clearing off all the arrears of Chancery business in his first year of office, Brougham proceeded to the work of reforming the civil law on Benthamite principles. He created the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council; he

[1] Walpole, *History of England,* vol. iv., p. 405.

created the Central Criminal Court; he took the first step towards the creation of County Courts; by abolishing fines and recoveries he greatly simplified conveyances; his Bankruptcy Bill became the germ of future legislation on the subject. Codification, on which Bentham and Austin laid so much stress, has unfortunately not yet been applied to English law.

India, as a despotically governed dependency, presented a freer field than England for the introduction of modern ideas. One of the demands of the new democracy had been that the trade monopoly of the East India Company should be put an end to. The privilege was taken from them in framing the new Charter of 1833. That instrument completed what the philosophic statesmen of the eighteenth century had begun—the transformation of the Company into a delegated agency for advancing the greatest happiness of the greatest number in a region where the co-efficient of possible felicity rose to hundreds of millions. The era of beneficent activity had, indeed, already begun. In 1827 Canning sent out as Governor-General of Bengal Lord William Bentinck, the son of a great Whig noble, and himself half a Radical. This illustrious humanitarian abolished flogging in the native Indian army, and put down Suttee, or the religious custom of burning widows alive, with as little scruple as he put down Thuggee, or the religious custom of strangling people in general. What was more, he instituted the system of admitting educated Hindoos to posts in the judicature—a most important step, not only as opening to them an honourable career, but also as making a

provision for public order without a ruinous addition to the financial burdens of India. During Wellington's Ministry it was more than once proposed to recall the reforming Governor, but Earl Grey's advent to power finally secured his position. Two years afterwards the Act that converted the Company into a purely political body made him the first Governor-General of all India; and for several months before resigning he enjoyed the assistance of an enthusiastic admirer in the person of Macaulay, who, after eloquently defending the new system of government as Secretary of the Board of Control, had been sent out to India as a member of the Supreme Council.

Macaulay himself thoroughly reformed the higher Hindoo education by substituting the study of English for the study of Oriental literature; and he gave India a Penal Code constructed on Benthamite principles, which a high authority, Fitzjames Stephen, prefers to the codes of France and Germany, and even regards as his most lasting monument. It did not, however, come into force until some years after the Mutiny—that is to say, after the clumsy system of a dual government had been abolished.

In order that utilitarian principles might be applied to the benefit of India, it was necessary that European methods of order and progress should be put into action through the whole peninsula, with no more regard for Asiatic prejudices than prudent policy required. A different rule was required for the good government of Colonies peopled by settlers of English or European race.

Experience has shown that these had better be left to manage their own affairs, without interference from the mother country, though not without such a measure of protection as their exposed position may necessitate, and such a community of citizenship as interest and affection may demand. A crisis in Canada, brought on by a long and complicated series of events not necessary to relate here, gave the English reformers an opportunity to declare that our relations with the Colonies should henceforth be conducted on rational principles. In Upper Canada a struggle between a jobbing oligarchy and the bulk of the Colonists, in Lower Canada a struggle between the old French and the new English settlers—aggravated, both of them, by the mismanagement of the Home Government—had led to insurrection and civil war. At length, in 1838, Lord Durham was sent out to compose the strife. He was Earl Grey's son-in-law, and the most advanced member of the Reform Cabinet. Many looked on him as the future leader of the progressive party in England. But his hasty and imperious temper made him an unsafe friend and a safe mark for foes. As Canadian Governor-General his policy was so fiercely assailed and so feebly supported at home that in a few months Durham felt compelled to resign. But the work for which he went out was already in principle accomplished. The celebrated Report issued under his name, which has guided the policy of all his successors, owes its origin to Benthamite inspiration. "I," says John Stuart Mill, the intellectual head of the school, "had been the prompter of his prompters. Lord Durham's report, written by Charles Buller,

partly under the inspiration of Wakefield, began a new era; its recommendations, extending to complete internal self-government, were in full operation in Canada within two or three years, and have since extended to nearly all the other Colonies of European race which have any claim to the character of important communities. And I may say that, in upholding the reputation of Lord Durham at the most important moment, I contributed materially to this result."[1]

It is to be noticed that the personality of William IV. placed a serious obstacle in the way of Canadian reconstitution, and that the acceptance of Durham's report was probably not unconnected with the advent to the throne of his successor, a young Queen whose indifference to politics facilitated the assumption of undivided sovereignty by middle-class opinion.

Thus, alike at the centre and at the extremities of the Empire, the tendency of the English Revolution was to substitute order for chaos, progress for corruption, and, to some extent, government by consent for government by constraint. Less brilliant and impressive than the changes so far passed in review, but perhaps even more intimately related to the future reorganisation of social life, was the municipal reform effected in 1835. Till then the borough corporations had been squalid little close oligarchies, worked in the interest of their patrons, Whig or Tory, and rewarded by the conversion of the public property under their control

[1] Mill, *Autobiography*, pp. 216–17.

into sources of private emolument. A Bill, transferring the management of the boroughs from these privileged individuals to the bulk of the ratepayers, was denounced by the extreme Conservatives as an invasion of the rights of property—the favourite metaphysical figment on that side, as the rights of man had been on the opposite side forty years before, and with less reason at the bottom of it. But Peel, who was assuming more and more the part of a middle-class leader, supported the Bill in the Commons; and, when the Lords returned it amended out of recognition, he stood by the Government in restoring the original outlines of their scheme.

So far we have been concerned almost solely with the reorganisation of government. We have now to consider how the new powers thus acquired were used for the common good.

First in importance comes the new Poor Law of 1834. It has been related in a former chapter how, under Pitt's rule, an unlimited extension was given to outdoor relief, and how this measure had contributed, with other causes, to stimulate the economical speculations of Malthus. His ideas were accepted by the Benthamites, whose opposition to indiscriminate alms-giving placed them on this point in sharp antagonism to the more impulsive Radicalism represented by Cobbett, as well as to those Tories who, partly from genuine philanthropy, partly from dislike of the manufacturers, wished to protect labour against the tyranny of capital. On the other hand, they had the full support of the leading Whigs, among whom, indeed, Malthus

himself may be reckoned. But the facts of the case spoke louder than any political partisan. A Commission, appointed to investigate the working of the Poor Law in 1832, reported in 1834. It showed —to borrow Brougham's energetic language—that those laws "had succeeded in wholly disconnecting the ideas of labour and its reward in the minds of the people; they had encouraged the idle and the profligate, at the expense of the honest and industrious; they had destroyed the independence of the peasant, and given him the degradation of a beggar"—with the assurance, which a beggar had not, of receiving alms whenever he chose to demand them.[1]

In one place a young man, the type of many more, was found saying: "I do not want work; I would rather have my 3s. 6d. from the parish without working than toil to get 10s. or 12s. a week." And, as the orator added, such young men in all probability supplemented the parish allowance with the profits of crime. Nor was the demoralisation limited "to inland places and to lazy rustics." The Kentish sailors, once renowned for their adventurousness and daring, would no longer put out to sea in winter, provided as they then were by the parish with 12s. a week.[2] The evil tended to perpetuate and aggravate itself by the contagion of example and by stimulating the growth of population. For every additional child the parish gave an additional allowance of 2s. a week; and as illegitimate children came in for the same privilege, a direct premium was put on

[1] Brougham, *Speeches,* vol. iii., pp. 488–89.
[2] Brougham, *op. cit.,* p. 495.

unchastity, the mother of a large family of bastards being eagerly sought after in marriage. Thus the burden increased more rapidly than the backs on which it was borne. The weight of pauper expenditure, in proportion to the population, at the two periods, was as seven in 1831 to four in 1801.[1]

To complete the stringent logic of the verification given to economic principle by this vast economic experiment, a negative instance was forthcoming. Over the whole of Scotland, where a different system of administering relief prevailed, no such evils existed; and in some favoured English districts, where a more rational administration had been adopted, industry flourished, and the poor-rate came down, first to one-half, and afterwards to one-third.[2]

A system securing a pension to every man at any age on demand might have been expected to raise the rate of wages by making the labourer independent of his employer. It had the contrary effect. As doles in aid of wages were allowed, the labourers accepted less than the cost of living would otherwise have compelled them to demand, with the result of shifting the burden of their maintenance on the ratepayers who did not profit by their work.

An end was put to these ruinous abuses by the Poor Law of 1834. It provided that henceforth outdoor relief should only be given to the sick and aged. Able-bodied paupers were only supported at the public expense in buildings where they were

[1] Porter, *Progress of the Nation,* vol. i., p. 84.
[2] Brougham, *op. cit.,* p. 502.

set to do unpleasant work on food sufficient to support life, but studiously kept under the mark of what a labourer in receipt of moderate wages could command. Existence in these workhouses was not agreeable, nor was it intended to be so; but their popular nickname of New Bastilles (pronounced Bastyles) was singularly ill-chosen. The old Bastille was a place where persons of the higher classes were detained, against their will, in idleness and relative luxury during the King's pleasure, with permission for married couples to live together; whereas nobody need enter a workhouse or remain there for any time against his will; and one of the rules most objected to was that a strict separation of the sexes prevented the breeding of hereditary paupers.

Another merit of the new law was that it created an administrative machinery, placing the raising and distribution of parish relief under the control of Boards elected by the ratepayers, supervised themselves by a central office in London.

The new Poor Law was angrily denounced by Cobbett, and by John Walter, a moderate Liberal, in the *Times;* but it passed both Houses by large majorities, Wellington, who loved superlatives, declaring it to be "the best Bill ever devised." Its real author was one of the Commissioners, Edwin Chadwick, an intimate friend and disciple of Bentham. Chadwick also took a leading though unseen part in another work of constructive legislation, the whole credit of which has fallen to others. This was the Factory Act of 1833.

It has been shown in a former chapter how the

old English Constitution, with its fortuitous system of checks and balances, by preventing the formation of a strong government, left powerful individuals and interests free to exercise grinding oppression on the most helpless members of the community, and how the most pitiful and unpitied among these unfortunates were the little children worked to death by factory labour. The reforming movement, genuine though feeble, of the early nineteenth century did something to ameliorate their lot. A pestilence caused by the insanitary condition of the Manchester factories, where child-apprentices were employed, led to an Act reducing their hours of work to twelve a day (1802). As an unintended result the atrocious apprenticeship system was discontinued, but only to be succeeded by the direct purchase of children from their own parents for the same exhausting toil. The Act of 1802 did not apply to this new category of infant slaves, who were treated almost as brutally as their orphan predecessors.[1] Sir Robert Peel, the great statesman's father, introduced another Bill in 1816, limiting all child-labour in factories to ten hours a day, and in this form it passed the Commons ; but the Lords raised the time to twelve hours, and restricted the measure to cotton mills. After all, the number of hours and the description of labour mattered little if, as we are told, the law remained a dead letter.

So matters stood until the reforming era of 1830, when a great agitation on the subject of child-labour and overwork in general sprang up, headed by representatives of all parties in the country. It was

[1] H. de B. Gibbins, *Industrial History*, p. 391.

not originally excited by any feeling of jealousy on the side of the landed interest against the manufacturers. On the contrary, the first public protest was raised in the manufacturing districts themselves. It came from the pen of Richard Oastler, who, though steward of a landed estate, had lived for many years in the heart of the factory districts, and was supplied with his facts by J. Wood, a Bradford manufacturer. Michael Sadler, an eloquent advocate of the poor, was induced by his representations to bring the subject before Parliament. Sadler was in the linen trade, and, like Oastler, a high Tory; but the first Bill for putting an end to child-labour and restricting the labour of boys and girls under eighteen to ten hours a day, was introduced by Hobhouse, a Radical, and Lord Morpeth, a Ministerial Whig. Neither is it true that political economists, as such, were opposed to legislative interference with the employment of children in factories. Malthus refers to it with approval,[2] and it subsequently received the support of McCulloch.

Sadler had no seat in the reformed Parliament, and the initiative passed from his hands to the abler guidance of Lord Ashley, so famous in the annals of philanthropy under his later title of Lord Shaftesbury. He was inspired by a deep religious feeling of the Evangelical cast, as also were Oastler and Sadler. But among those who deprecated hasty legislation were some whose love of humanity did not yield to theirs. Lord Althorp, the Whig leader of the House of Commons, rightly insisted

[2] *Essay on Population*, p. 421. Hodder, *Life of Lord Shaftesbury*, vol. i., p. 157.

on a Parliamentary inquiry into the facts of the case, and a Commission was appointed for the purpose. One of the Commissioners was Edwin Chadwick, the Benthamite. He, we are told, "was the chief author of the Report which recommended the appointment of Government inspectors under a central authority, and the limitation of children's work to six hours daily.[1].....Among other proposals in the Report was one that employers should be held responsible for accidents to their work-people—a suggestion that has only been carried into effect by the Employers' Liability Act (1898)." It may be said that this proposal, as being no more than a new provision for the redressal of injuries, still remains within the limits of that individualism with which Benthamism is commonly identified. But no interpretation of individualism will cover Chadwick's recommendation, made before a Committee of the House of Commons in 1837, that the traffic in spirituous liquors should be restricted, and that healthy recreation for the people should be provided.[2]

Bentham's school was, in truth, pledged to nothing but the reorganisation of individual and social life on a basis of pure reason, with the greatest possible increase of happiness for its end. As the proximate means to that end the identification of private with public interest was prescribed; and again, as a means to that secondary end, the transfer of political power from the aristocracy to

[1] By the Bill actually passed in 1833 children under nine were forbidden to work at all, the labour of children under thirteen was limited to eight hours a day, and the labour of young persons under eighteen to sixty-nine hours a week.

[2] *Dictionary of National Biography,* Supplement, vol. i., p. 407.

the people. To what extent the compulsion implied in every exercise of power should be carried remained a question not of principle but of detail. A good deal of reforming activity was directed towards the removal of restrictions on the open expression of opinion, on locomotion, on trade, on colonial autonomy, on the independence of foreign nations, on the personal liberty of negroes, or, again, towards the removal of disabilities connected with religious belief; and the association of Liberalism with the systematic struggle for universal emancipation led to its occasional identification, in the minds both of Liberals and Conservatives, with a rooted hostility to all restrictions on liberty as such. The nature-worship of the eighteenth century, continued far into the nineteenth, gave a sort of religious sanction to this feeling. But the Benthamites, at any rate, were inaccessible to such illusions. They no more believed in nature as a lawgiver than they believed in the Pentateuch ; and, however much they may have regarded individual interest as a safe guide for the economic man, they held that man, as a lawyer and legislator, was in most instances set against the general interest by exclusive attention to his own advantage, and that this divergence would continue until the two were brought into coincidence by a new system of government and education—a theory borrowed, consciously or not, from the idealistic philosophy of Plato. And even their political economy embodied one very important exception to the general principle of letting things alone. For they fully accepted Malthus's theory of population, according to which the mass

of mankind could only be rescued from abject poverty by habitual disobedience to the most imperious of natural instincts.

The new Poor Law was in the first instance a triumph for the principle of *laissez-faire* by withdrawing the artificial encouragement previously given to the idle and improvident as well as to the multiplication of their numbers. But it also brought up the question whether, besides withdrawing bounties, artificial checks should not be imposed on the growth of population; and still wider issues were opened by the Report of the Commission on factory labour. It was no derogation from the principle of free contract that children should not be sold into slavery and worked to death; but to interfere with the contracts between their parents and the manufacturers involved the assumption of new responsibilities on the part of the State, going far beyond the mere duty of maintaining order.

Nor could the question be long argued on grounds of mere abstract metaphysical right. As a result of child-labour the population of the manufacturing districts was found to be fast degenerating; and this alone seemed to justify restrictive legislation, for any theory that forbids the State to protect the health of its citizens stands self-condemned. But if so, then the insanitary employment of women, the future mothers of the race, likewise called for State intervention, as well as their employment in trades of a demoralising character. And this, again, suggested serious doubts whether they, any more than children, were capable of contracting freely for themselves. Finally, the labour of the various

classes of operatives employed in factories was so interdependent that the hours of one set could not be abridged without bringing the others to a standstill—a circumstance which would suggest the desirability of fixing a shorter legal day for men also, thus entailing a fresh inroad on the theory of *laissez-faire*. In social as well as in physical science the applicability of metaphysical conceptions broke down under the stress of fact.

Not that the rigid economists would allow the existence of any such discrepancy between fact and theory. They claimed that the violated law of *laissez-faire* would soon avenge itself in famine. Shorter hours meant diminished production—that is, a less amount of capital available for the payment of wages. The answer was that the produce of labour would increase with its efficiency, and that this depended on the health and strength of the operatives, which would gain by their working for shorter hours. As for the children, new machines were invented to do the work from which they had been debarred. And, apart from this expedient, recourse was had to the simple device of employing them in successive shifts, so that a child, though not the same child, was always available for the office required.

Edwin Chadwick, the real author of the Factory Commission Report, had no scruples about the State regulation of labour; and his recommendation that the children should be sent to school during the time saved off their work proves that he had none as regards compulsory education either. Compulsory or not, State education signally violates

the principle of *laissez-faire*. It is therefore noteworthy that the first proposal to establish a system of national State education was made in 1837 by Roebuck, at that time a Benthamite, and seconded by Grote, who remained a Benthamite through life. Roebuck advocated a purely secular system of teaching, and wished that the cost should be defrayed out of Church property. Government took the question out of his hands, and provisionally settled it by granting £30,000 in aid of the National Society and the British and Foreign School Society. It will be remembered that these societies grew out of the systems of Bell and Lancaster respectively, one being supported by Church people and the other by Nonconformists. As the amount allotted to each body was proportioned to the local contributions it received from private sources, and as the National Society was much the richer of the two, the Ministerial plan amounted to a fresh endowment of the Church of England at the expense of the people.

Lord Brougham, as a Scotchman, was an enthusiast for education, and had more definite ideas about it than any of his party. He observed that under the voluntary system school attendance in England had more than doubled in fifteen years; and he feared that the State might do more harm than good by taking the movement out of the hands of private enterprise. But he could not conceal from himself the fact that the supply of education given fell far short of the demand, and was even more deficient in quality than in quantity. As a Scotchman, again, he was more open to French influence than his English contemporaries.

Deeply impressed by the success of the Normal schools in France, he proposed that similar institutions for the training of teachers should be established among ourselves. The cost would be trifling and the benefit immense. He also proposed to organise a system for the administration of the funds, whether charitable or public, available for educational purposes, consisting of elected committees all over the country under the direction of a Central Board in London.

When Brougham made these proposals he had ceased to be a member of the Government; but his scheme was adopted by Lord John Russell in 1839, with the omission, however, of the elected committees. Even so, the clergy were infuriated at the prospect of losing their ascendancy, and in the face of their opposition the proposal for a Normal school had to be withdrawn; while the proposal to place all the assisted schools under the inspection of emissaries from a Committee of the Privy Council could only be saved by subjecting them and their reports to the approval of the Bishops.

The failure of the middle-class Parliament and its elected agents to cope adequately with the educational question shows out more conspicuously by contrast with their energy and courage elsewhere. At this very time they were reforming the postal system by introducing a low uniform charge for the delivery of stamped letters all over the kingdom on a uniformly graduated scale of weights, at the same time abolishing the privilege, enjoyed by some among the rich, of sending their letters free. The

difference was that this and the other great reforms effected in previous years, or to be effected not long afterwards, were either accepted without distinction of party or were carried against party opposition by the overwhelming pressure of public opinion which the new representative system brought to bear directly on the rulers of the people, while giving them power to execute its will. Popular education, on the other hand, though usually demanded by democracies, was not pressed on the governing classes with any such unanimity, because it had become so associated with religion as to be fatally hampered by the religious anarchy of England. Nonconformity had contributed to the growth of English individualism, and so far must be credited with its share of whatever benefits we owe to that tendency ; but it is also responsible to the same extent for that paralysis of the Government which made it nearly useless as an instrument either of order or of progress. Moreover, by the stimulus of opposition it had made the Church more sectarian ; while by breeding religious rivalry it had stimulated those particular religious beliefs which are most unfavourable to the growth of science and reason.

Nonconformity has always found its strongest political basis in the middle class, and therefore its importance was greatly enhanced by the revolution which made that class supreme in the State. Advantage was taken of the change to procure the removal of some grievances under which Dissenters still suffered. They received permission to marry in their own chapels, or without any religious ceremony whatever at the registrar's office. In 1836, against the protests of Oxford and Cambridge, a Royal

Charter incorporated the University of London, enabling it to give degrees without the acceptance of any religious test or the passing of any religious examination. A Bill to abolish religious tests in the two ancient universities had passed the Commons by a large majority two years before, but had been rejected by the Lords.

Another grievance of the Nonconformists, payment of Church rates (that is, being taxed to support places of worship which they did not use, and often did not approve of), was left without a remedy by the reformed Parliament. The Whig Ministers proposed to throw the expense of keeping up Church buildings on Church property, but could not overcome the resistance excited by this most equitable arrangement.

In proportion to their grievances Irish Roman Catholics were much worse treated than English Protestant Dissenters by the English middle-class Sovereign. An alien Church, numbering but a small fraction of the Irish people among its members, was established in their midst, and supported by the labour of a peasantry who for the most part detested it, spent on lands originally devoted to the maintenance of their own clergy. Its revenues were levied under the form of tithes; and payment of them under that form, the most noxious conceivable, was resisted with every circumstance of outrage on the collectors by the aggrieved cultivators of the soil. These poor people were told with stupid pedantry that if tithes were abolished their rent would be raised to an equivalent amount, and that the money would go

into the pockets of Protestant landlords. Nothing could be truer; but it remained equally true that if this revenue, either under the name of tithes or of rent-charge, were handed back to its original owners, the Catholic parishioners who now had to support them would henceforth be relieved from that heavy expense. If, on the other hand, it were considered inexpedient to re-endow the Roman priesthood, there was the alternative, since adopted, of secularising Church property, and devoting it in other ways to the relief or improvement of the poorer classes. Finally, there was the plan of commuting tithes into a rent-charge to be used for the payment of the clergy of the Established Church.

The last-named course was ultimately adopted by agreement between the two great political parties in 1838. The reason why it was delayed till then is so characteristic of English public opinion at the time that a reference to it will be instructive.

One of the earliest measures proposed by Lord Grey's Ministry in the Reformed Parliament dealt with the temporalities of the Irish Church. It proposed, very reasonably, that two of the four Archbishoprics and ten of the twenty-two Bishoprics then existing should be suppressed; that the Bishops' lands should be vested in ecclesiastical commissioners, who were expected to make more out of them than their existing holders; that the stipends assigned to future Bishops should be considerably less than the incomes received by the present Bishops; and that the surplus revenues, if any, thus obtained should be devoted to secular uses.

This last provision, known as the Appropriation

Clause, encountered such violent opposition, even among the Whigs, that it was provisionally withdrawn, and the Bill passed both Houses without any other material alteration. Next year Lord John Russell revived the Appropriation Clause. Subsequently accepted more than once as part of an Irish Tithes Bill by the Commons, it was rejected on each occasion by the Lords, and finally abandoned by its authors. The leading Whigs were in advance of their age, but their liberality only served to drive some of their ablest men into the Tory ranks, and to prolong Irish discord by postponing the commutation of tithes.

"All the wise men were for Catholic Emancipation," said Lord Melbourne, "and all the fools against it—and the fools were right." If the fools were right, it was not for the right reason. What they anticipated did not come to pass. The Roman Catholic members have not used their Parliamentary position as an instrument for the destruction of Protestantism and religious liberty in England. But the wise were mistaken in thinking that Irish discontent would be appeased by a single instalment of justice. While grievances remained agitation was bound to continue, especially as, thanks to the fools, the long delay of emancipation had taught the Irish people and their great leader, O'Connell, how much could be effected by its systematic employment against rulers who yielded to violence what they would not yield to reason. Resistance to the exaction of tithes was met by a Coercion Bill substituting martial law for the ordinary processes of justice in the disturbed districts, and placing the right of meeting every-

where at the mercy of the Lord Lieutenant. It was carried with a facility offering a remarkable contrast to the difficulty of getting any sort of remedial measure through, and to the impossibility of passing the Appropriation Clause. Such proceedings very naturally confirmed O'Connell in his belief that the Irish had better be left to manage their own affairs in their own way; but his demand for the Repeal of the Union had no immediate effect beyond exciting a bitter feeling of hostility against England among the Catholic Irish, and increasing the discredit of the Whigs, obliged as they were to accept the Parliamentary support of the great orator who habitually referred to them in terms of calculated scorn and hatred.

O'Connell privately complained that the Liberals were infidels, which, according to him, alienated from them the sympathies of the Irish people. This was very ungrateful on his part, for had the Liberals inherited the religious convictions of their political ancestors, the English Puritans, they certainly would not have supported Catholic Emancipation, nor proposed the secularisation of Irish Church property. What delayed Emancipation so long was the religious bigotry of the English middle class; what enabled the Lords to reject the Appropriation Clause time after time was the knowledge that it excited no enthusiasm among the new electorate. We shall see hereafter that the much more sweeping secularisation carried thirty years later was only made possible by the weakening of religious animosities due to the spread of rationalism in the meanwhile.

A great instrument of enlightened legislation

had been created and used with brilliant success for realising ideas hitherto debated only within the schools of thought. But the men who wielded it could give neither education to England nor peace to Ireland, because they found themselves confronted by a force which served as a rallying-point for all the enemies of progress, and against which Bentham had flung himself three times in vain—the force of organised pietism, seeking to secure the greatest happiness of the greatest number in a world that is not ours.

Up to a comparatively recent period any Government that excited the hostility of the Church of England has been doomed to destruction. Both the Commonwealth and the Stuart monarchy had that misfortune, and both fell almost without a struggle. Even the genius of Marlborough could not uphold his friends when they dared to touch a parson. What overthrew the younger Pitt, and so long debarred the Whigs from power, was really the Church, acting through the stubborn will of George III. and the vacillating will of his successor. Wellington's fall was the Church's revenge for Emancipation; and now the Reform Whigs found themselves unequally matched against the same relentless foe. Russell's revival of the Appropriation Clause drove four of his colleagues into the Conservative ranks, Stanley, afterwards thrice Prime Minister, and Sir James Graham, an administrator of exceptional ability, being among the number. Their loss was soon followed by the retirement of Earl Grey. For want of a better chief, the incompetent Lord Melbourne had to be

put in his place. Nature had meant Melbourne for a scholarly mystic,[1] as she meant Lord Althorp, who led the House of Commons under him, for a grazier. When the death of his father, Earl Spencer, removed Althorp from that uncongenial position, the Ministry fell to pieces. The King, who sided warmly with the Church against Russell, if he did not actually drive them from office, at any rate claimed and received full credit for having done so. On Melbourne's resignation he sent for Peel, who at once dissolved Parliament. The Tories, who had counted no more than 150 in the first reformed House of Commons, won an immense number of seats, and probably would have won a majority had not the people resented the King's interference. A series of defeats in the new House compelled Peel to resign, and William IV. had to undergo the humiliation of recalling Melbourne to office. Parliamentary reform had given a mortal blow to the power of the Crown; but in its last agonies it exercised its old effect of weakening the real Sovereign. As a penalty for accepting its support, Peel, the true middle-class Minister and destined future chief, was condemned to six years more of opposition. The delay would have been shorter had not an untoward combination of circumstances allowed the royal influence to exert itself once more.

In 1837 the young Princess Victoria succeeded to the throne, and her accession was followed, in accordance with a rule since altered, by a dissolution of Parliament. The Whigs were rather

[1] See his character in Bulwer Lytton's *St. Stephen's.*

stronger in the new House than in the old; but the respite did not last long, and, after two years of weak government, Melbourne again resigned. Peel was again sent for, but made it a condition of accepting office that the great Whig ladies of the royal household should be replaced by attendants more in the confidence of his party. The young Queen, whose instincts were autocratic, showed on this occasion the temper of an Elizabeth, and declared that she would not give up her old friends. Parties were so nicely balanced that her will decided the question, and the Whigs came back, but thoroughly discredited, and with a position hardly better than caretakers for Peel and his Conservative followers. Appealing to the country from a vote of no confidence, and taking up at the last moment an insincere cry for cheap bread, they found themselves this time decisively beaten, and were condemned by a majority of ninety-one when the new Parliament met.

Chapter VII.

THE CHURCHES AND THE WORLD

While the events related in the last chapter were succeeding one another on the surface of history, a reactionary current had set in deeper down whose representatives were hardly more in sympathy with Sir Robert Peel than with his Whig and Radical opponents.

We saw how the Peace of 1814 was followed by a strong religious movement connected with the Methodist and Evangelical revivals of the previous century. So great, indeed, was the fascination exercised even on the intellectual classes that during the next twenty-five years young men of the highest and most varied ability were drawn to the Christian ministry in numbers such as had not been known since the Reformation; while even in the hands of laymen poetry and science received a distinctly religious impress, markedly contrasted with their treatment by the preceding generation. This religion had a strongly pietistic character; that is, it involved a constant reference to what was to come after death as infinitely more important than what was happening now, and a view of our present life as deriving its sole significance from the connection of what happened in it with what was to come after death. Among the more ignorant and excitable religionists, the study of what was supposed to be revealed in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures

stimulated still further their restless curiosity about a future state, and led to fantastic interpretations of ancient prophecies in the light of contemporary politics. Edward Irving, as we saw, owed his popularity to the address with which he put himself forward as the hierophant of such mysteries; and the original object of Keble's *Christian Year* was to appease the prevalent excitement by directing it towards more sober and profitable meditations.

If the millenarian visions of the religious revivalists were rooted in eighteenth-century pietism, they were no less intimately related to the revolutionary aspirations of the age. In the presence of absorbing social interests, the individual soul could no longer remain wrapped up in the contemplation of its own eternal destinies. Hence the prominence given to the social aspect of human immortality as a reign of the saints in the theology of the period. But the millennium itself had to be preceded and brought on by the conversion of the whole earth to true—*i.e.*, Protestant—Christianity, accompanied by the removal of whatever abuses still impeded that glorious consummation. Efforts in this direction demanded concert, union, organisation; and with the need of organisation came the need of a central authority. As the French Revolution had ended in the centralised despotism of Napoleon; as the Benthamite programme of reforms had substituted an undivided middle-class control for an incoherent oligarchy, and was enriching the administration with a number of new directing departments, so in various quarters efforts began to revive the idea of the Church, always an integral

element of Christianity, or rather to make it more of a reality than before.

We are accustomed to associate this idea in a rather exclusive way with the Tractarian Movement at Oxford; but the Oxford experiment was only one of a number, enjoying a unique success because it was worked on the basis of a solid existing institution. Irving founded a Church on the model of what he conceived the Apostolic community of Jerusalem to have been. His friend Coleridge, starting from the opposite pole of speculation, constructed the idea of a Church as a body holding in trust national property to be expended in promoting the interests of progressive civilisation. Such a Church need not be identified with any form of theological teaching; although, in the case of the Anglican establishment, the traditional dogmas, interpreted in the light of his own philosophy, might be allowed to live on as the centre of a vast system of culture. Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, who was in some ways a Coleridgean, meditated comprehensive schemes for uniting Churchmen and Dissenters in the same establishment, and English and Prussian Protestants in the same communion. James Mill, going further than Coleridge, proposed turning the endowed clergy from preachers of divinity into teachers of morality. Maurice, a Unitarian converted to liberal orthodoxy, and the most philosophical of all the young men that the religious movement had swept into Anglican orders, loved to exhibit Christianity on its social side as the Kingdom of Christ. Whately, the great Whig Archbishop of Dublin, strove for years to keep up a joint system of popular education

in Ireland, based on as much Christianity as could be taught in common to Catholic and Protestant children.

Among more conservative clerics the need of a stronger ecclesiastical organisation made itself primarily felt as a reaction against the rising rationalism of the age. What they called German neology—that is, scientific Biblical criticism—had begun to make its way from Hanover to England before communication between King George's insular and continental dominions had been cut by the war, and with the renewal of intercourse after the Peace the current had again set in. Rose, a High Church Cambridge theologian, sounded the alarm in a published course of lectures (1828) enumerating all the points on which German University professors had presumed to shake the faith of their classes in Scriptural infallibility. According to him, this lamentable heterodoxy was due to the abandonment of Episcopacy by German Protestantism. At Oxford, where nothing was then known of modern criticism, the triumph of Liberalism in English politics at first excited most indignation, and Peel lost his seat for the University by conceding the Catholic claims. Academic intolerance found an unexpected mouthpiece in Keble, the poet of the *Christian Year,* who had acquired great authority by his hymnology, by his learning, and by his saintly character. Chosen to preach the Assize Sermon at Oxford on July 14th, 1833, he took the opportunity of making a violent attack on what he called National Apostasy. Without actually naming the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts and Catholic Emancipation,

while admitting even that such measures might be justified on grounds of political expediency, the preacher vehemently protested against the exultation with which such lamentable necessities had been hailed as in themselves a good thing. But there were worse signs of the times than even such deluded self-congratulations. There was a general tendency to look on a difference of religious opinion as of no account in the daily business of life, to repose public confidence in the heretic or infidel, and even to make a friend of him in private as readily as if he were an orthodox believer. There was also a culpable indifference to the authority of the clergy in matters of religion. Yet the Old Testament—which Keble treats throughout as an infallible record and guide—teaches a very different lesson. It tells us that statesmen should humble themselves before the accredited ministers of religion, and bow to their decisions as to the oracles of God.

In the Preface accompanying his published Sermon Keble specifies the Irish Church Bill, suppressing certain Irish sees, as the occasion that more particularly called it forth, denouncing as impious the State's pretension to interfere with the internal economy of ecclesiastical institutions. In view of the possible disestablishment of the Church of England he and his friends fell back on the supernatural character which, according to them, distinguishes it from all other Protestant bodies, if indeed it could properly be called Protestant at all. Their claim rested on Apostolical succession, on the alleged historical fact that the power to teach revealed truth and to absolve from sin descended

by an unbroken chain of ordination from Christ and his Apostles. It was determined to issue a series of Tracts setting forth this claim, and appealing in the first instance to the clergy, whose mystical pretensions, if asserted with sufficient emphasis, would surely enable them to recover their ancient dignity and power.

Such was the origin of the Tractarian Movement. It quickly passed from Keble's guidance into the hands of a far superior leader, John Henry Newman, beyond dispute the greatest pulpit orator of the nineteenth century, and, in the opinion of many, its greatest prose writer also. A singularly magnetic personality enabled his literary gifts to tell for quite as much as they were worth, and secured for him the implicit obedience of other adherents to the Movement whose intellectual powers, as measured by logical ability and justness of thought, were superior to his own.

Newman had begun as an Evangelical; and the religious position he subsequently adopted may be more properly described as an enlargement of Evangelical principles than as a reaction against them. None of his associates was so strongly impressed by the growing rationalism of the age; indeed, his intellectual sympathies with it were so strong as to draw on him a wholly unmerited imputation of secret unbelief. And he considered that neither Evangelicalism nor, indeed, popular Protestantism in any form had a good logical case as against infidel attacks. Heartily accepting the Bible as an infallible authority, he held that it needed the warrant of an infallible Church to be

accepted, and that any argument against the Church applied equally to the Bible.

Pusey, who afterwards gave his name to the Movement, was not drawn into it until some time after the publication of the Tracts had begun. His views had indeed been at first more liberal than Keble's or Newman's. He knew German, had travelled in Germany, and resented Rose's onslaught on the German theologians, some of whom were his friends. A pamphlet of his, written in their defence, seemed even to indicate some serious reservations about the extent to which Biblical infallibility should be accepted as of faith. But the remonstrances of his High Church friends soon put an end to such doubts, and henceforth Pusey gave his unfaltering support to the literal accuracy of every statement in the Old Testament, no less than to the dogma of a never-ending hell, as integral elements of Christianity. As for Keble, he held that most of the men who felt difficulties about Scriptural inspiration were too wicked to be reasoned with.

Among Newman's younger followers the most conspicuous were Hurrell Froude and W. G. Ward. Froude was a Romanticist, who hated the Reformation, and felt more enthusiasm for the mediæval than for the primitive Church. He urged Newman further along the reactionary path, but died before the alternative between insular and Roman Catholicism could be fairly presented to his choice. Ward, before he came under Newman's influence, had been a Broad Churchman of the Arnoldian school. As a keen dialectician, he convinced himself that Arnold's principles logically led to complete unbelief. It was easier to prove that Tractarianism,

when pressed to its legitimate consequences, involved complete submission to Rome; and Ward lost no opportunity of reasoning the matter out with Newman.

The Reformation had begun as a revolt against priestly authority, and had ended, in Calvinism, with the reduction to a minimum of the sacramental and ritualistic systems by which that authority is chiefly maintained. The Tractarian reassertion of sacerdotalism naturally led to a reversal of the process, to a resumption of the practices and beliefs which Protestant England had condemned as unscriptural and superstitious. Such a proceeding was not indefensible. It so happened that the formularies of the Anglican Church had been carefully constructed so as to conciliate that considerable body of Catholics, amounting probably to a majority of the whole population, who had separated from the See of Rome solely because on no other terms could the national independence of England be preserved. Nor was this all. In clearing away alleged mediæval corruptions the English Church Reformers had not trusted to their unaided private judgment. They had appealed to primitive doctrine and practice as evinced by the Fathers and the first great Councils. Their interpretation was not infallible; it was open to correction or completion from the researches of later scholars. By a skilful use of such methods Newman concluded that an Anglican clergyman might, consistently with his ordination vows, hold something very like the whole cycle of Roman doctrine as formulated before the Council of Trent. His contention provoked a general outcry, which

brought the Tracts to an end; and the charge of dishonesty was freely flung at him and his party. It came with an ill grace from Low Churchmen who on some points were departing not less widely from the plain sense of the formularies in the direction of Calvinism than their opponents were departing from it in the direction of Rome.

After long hesitation, Newman and Ward extricated themselves from this disagreeable position by submitting to the Church which the patristic researches of the one and the peremptory dialectic of the other had convinced them was the sole refuge from that utter unbelief to which unaided human reason is condemned.

So ended the Tractarian Movement. Oxford resumed her interrupted studies, and the current of free criticism so dreaded by Newman returned in greater force than ever. The Tracts had failed to effect the original purpose of their chief author; they had not persuaded the English clergy as a body to claim a position of commanding authority on disputed questions of belief; nor in a Church constituted like theirs was the claim possible, for no such authority can exist without a supreme head to issue and enforce its decrees. Besides, the Bishops showed no inclination to assume new responsibilities, nor would the majority of the clergy have accepted their guidance had it been offered. Many individual curates were not slow to plume themselves on their restored dignity as successors of the Apostles, though in their hearts they felt much prouder of being classed as English gentlemen; and celibacy was the very last feature of Romanism they were disposed to imitate. Such

as they were, this disorganised band of Puseyites, as they now began to be called, after their sole remaining Oxford leader, found themselves far outnumbered by the Evangelicals, to whom Apostolical succession was at best but an antiquarian curiosity, while the doctrines and practices associated with it by the new High Churchmen were objects of fanatical hatred and terror. Intellectually, after Newman's secession, the lights of the party could not compare with such divines as Milman, Whately, Hare, Thirlwall, and Maurice, soon to be reinforced by Arthur Stanley, Charles Kingsley, Robertson of Brighton, and Benjamin Jowett. Some of these were more than suspected of doctrinal heresy; none were sacerdotalists; all cherished the connection between the Church of England and the new Liberal State.

The Movement had begun as a protest against the ecclesiastical policy of the reforming Whigs. Three years afterwards fresh and more direct provocation was given by Lord Melbourne's appointment of Dr. Hampden to be Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford. Hampden had been Bampton Lecturer in 1832, and had chosen the scholastic theology for his subject. The course he delivered was one long attack on the mediæval dogmatism that his dreaming contemporaries proposed to make the supreme law of belief. They now accused him of heretical views about the Trinity. His real offence probably consisted in throwing some doubt on the penal interpretation of the Atonement. Anyhow, a strong official protest against the appointment was got up, signed, it is said, by some who had not read the incriminated

lectures. Melbourne persisted in forcing his professor on the reluctant university authorities, who used their power to make Hampden's position as disagreeable as they could. Eleven years later Lord John Russell raised a fresh outcry by promoting him to the See of Hereford, carrying the appointment through against the protest of half the Episcopal Bench. Arnold, whose orthodoxy seemed more doubtful still, would probably have been made a Bishop if he had lived.

The logical course would have been for the High Churchmen to sever their connection with the State altogether. In Scotland this was the actual outcome of a somewhat similar movement. There the Evangelical revival took the form of a revolution in Church government. As religious zeal increased among the people, it was claimed that the congregations should be allowed, if they chose, to exercise a veto on the choice of their ministers. This was found to be inconsistent with the law as it stood, and every attempt to alter the law broke down. Finally, under the lead of the most distinguished living Scotch Churchman, the celebrated Dr. Chalmers, 474 ministers seceded from the Establishment, and set up a Free Church, supported by voluntary contributions.

But, although the Movement failed to accomplish the objects of those who first began it, their efforts were by no means thrown away. By provoking religious controversy they greatly raised the religious temperature of the upper and middle classes, thus contributing to that state of opinion which enabled the Lords to reject the Appropriation Clause and eventually drove the Whigs out of

office. And not only did the Church of England profit, like every other religious body, by this reinforcement of religious zeal, but it profited in a more special way by the reforming activity of the detested Liberal Government. During his brief tenure of office between Melbourne's first and second Administrations, Peel issued a Commission to ascertain what was the amount of the Church's revenues, and how they were distributed among her ministers. Its report brought to light the existence of scandalous abuses. Speaking broadly, the richest preferments fell to those who did the least work, or, in numerous instances, to those who did no work at all, while the hardest workers were the most miserably paid. Nearly half the beneficed clergy were non-resident, with the result that Dissenting chapels had nearly doubled in twenty-four years.[1] On the basis of this information Russell carried a series of measures putting an end to the most crying abuses, and establishing a less unequal proportion between the services rendered and the emoluments received.

Such legislation, excellent as it was, effectually blocked what would perhaps have been the more salutary course, recommended by the philosophical Radicals, of applying the surplus revenues of the Church to national education. Above all, by making the Church more popular it increased the power of the clergy to resist any comprehensive system of State education, which from the nature of things must have been unsectarian, like Lancaster's, or secular, like Bentham's.

[1] Walpole, *History of England*, vol. v., pp. 259–60.

Before clerical resistance to popular education could be even partially overruled, a new current of opinion operating against theological prejudice of every kind had to come into play. Two distinct forces, represented, however imperfectly, in Paine's *Age of Reason,* combined to swell its volume. There was the direct attack of rationalistic criticism on theological beliefs; and there was the indirect effect wrought by science in substituting the view of nature as an orderly, uninterrupted sequence of events, without any known beginning or end, for the supernaturalist view of the same events as emanating from a personal will, and subject at any moment to its interference for purposes best known to the guardians of accredited religious tradition, and occasionally disclosed by men and women believed to be in the confidence of that overruling will.

Many hold that democracy counts as a third force co-operating with criticism and science. But this seems to be a mistake, resting on incomplete historical studies or on accidental political experiences. A democracy where the people remain in ignorance is from the nature of the case rather favourable to the more simple and primitive beliefs of mankind, or, more generally, to whatever offers the greatest felicity at the cost of the smallest intellectual effort. Popular feeling may easily be excited against costly ecclesiastical establishments; but so also may the cupidity of a despot or an oligarchy; and, when pious benefactions have been given up to public plunder, the zeal that originated them returns, in default of diffused enlightenment, with equal facility under every form of government, and becomes the basis of fresh accumulations.

The rising influence of the people as such in English politics long remained associated with an increase of general bigotry; and it seems more than doubtful whether in the aristocratically organised Scottish society of the eighteenth century a sustentation fund of a million and a quarter could have been raised for the Free Church.

In fact, the transfer of power to a more extended section of the community registered by the Reform Act seems at first to have rather discouraged rationalistic criticism, and given a theological twist to scientific ideas. Thirlwall took orders two years after publishing his translation of Schleiermacher, nor did he make any other contribution to liberal theology. As tutor at Trinity College, Cambridge, he advocated the admission of Dissenters to the University, condemning also the collegiate lectures on divinity and compulsory attendance at chapel—pronouncements which led to the forfeiture of his academical position. After the outcry against his *History of the Jews,* Milman kept silence for ten years. In 1840, when the reaction seemed to be abating, he published a far bolder work, the *History of Christianity,* studiously minimising the miraculous element in the New Testament, and maximising the points of contact between the new revelation and the religious developments reached on various lines of unassisted heathen speculation. This time Milman's enemies were discreet enough not to advertise his heresies by such extreme vituperation as before; but their dangerous character was quietly pointed out, and the circulation of the book seems to have been effectually blocked. A little before its publication Charles Hennell, a

highly intelligent Unitarian layman, had handled the same subjects with much less learning, but with much greater freedom, in *An Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity,* giving, indeed, no satisfactory solution of the problem, but impugning the miraculous narratives of the Gospel with such effect as to convince George Eliot, then a girl of eighteen, that the Evangelical view of religion she had adopted was not true.

The wide popularisation of physical science in England dates from 1831, the year when the British Association was founded. Several among its prominent teachers — Chalmers, Sedgwick, Buckland, and Whewell, for example—were clergymen ; and Faraday, the greatest of them all, sometimes conducted the religious services of the little sect to which he belonged.

Apart from the gratification of their own devotional feelings there were ample pecuniary rewards for those who, in the poetical language of Tom Moore, made "Science the torch-bearer to Religion." A pious peer, Lord Bridgewater, bequeathed £8,000 to subsidise Natural Theology ; and his executors fulfilled his intentions by dividing the money among eight men of science, four of them clerics, each of whom was paid to produce a treatise bringing evidence from his own particular study to prove the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator. One of these treatises, written by the Rev. Professor Buckland, an Oxford geologist, had an enormous circulation, and earned for its lucky author a handsome sum in addition to the Bridgewater fee of a thousand pounds. This was

in 1836. The author had made his reputation thirteen years before by a book called *Reliquiæ Diluvianæ, or Observations on the Organic Remains Attesting the Action of a Universal Deluge.* Such an event, had it occurred, would have proved more for the power than for the wisdom or goodness of its author; but, whatever might be its bearings on natural religion, the *Reliquiæ* was warmly welcomed as a support to revealed religion, whose authenticity seemed at that time to be closely bound up with the historical truth of a book where a universal deluge is recorded as having actually taken place not many thousand years ago. Buckland subsequently abandoned what he had once defended, and was bitterly assailed by his fellow-clergymen in consequence.[1]

However its relations with Scripture might ultimately be adjusted, geology was supposed to bring incontrovertible proof of the popular religious philosophy by its then accepted doctrine of Catastrophes. Cuvier, the great French palæontologist, taught that Noah's Flood came last in a series of great cataclysms, by which the living population of the globe was periodically cleared off, to be subsequently replaced by a new organic creation. Now, unless the earth were credited with a power of spontaneously generating plants and animals on the largest scale—and that such a power ever did or could exist seemed contrary to all experience—no alternative remained but to admit that God himself intervened on each occasion to fill up the void.

At a time, however, when this argument was being most confidently hawked about, the

[1] White, *Warfare of Science and Theology*, vol. i., p. 232.

hypothesis on which it rested had already received a mortal blow from the greatest living authority on the life-history of the earth. In 1830 Charles Lyell published his famous *Principles of Geology*. That work is one long argument going to prove that the known facts can be explained without the intervention of any such catastrophes as Cuvier demanded. The natural forces now in operation are enough to account for every past change in the climatic conditions and in the distribution of land and water on the earth's surface ever since it became capable of supporting life. There are no abrupt transitions from one geological period to another. All is orderly sequence, and at the same time all is perpetual change. Lyell still admitted that every new species represented a separate act of creation; but his uniformitarian theory made possible the subsequent theory by which the successive appearance of organisms adapted to altered environments has been interpreted as due to the unaided operation of natural causes.

Lyell privately described his theory as striking at the Mosaic cosmogony, but he avoided any public expression of hostility to the prejudices of the age. It is, however, reported on his own testimony, given long afterwards, that this reserve did not save him from social ostracism for having contributed, however indirectly, "to discredit the Pentateuchal accounts of the Creation and the Deluge" (Huxley). It is, at any rate, certain that ladies were excluded from his professional lectures at King's College, London, probably because his subject involved some adverse reference to the Mosaic cosmology. Mrs. Somerville was preached against

in York Cathedral, presumably for the same offence.

So much of the national energy spent itself on politics, religion, and science during the Reform era that less remained available for imaginative literature and history. Brief lyrics, brilliant review articles, and novels of episodical rather than concentrated interest were most in request among readers with little leisure, and most readily supplied by writers on whose time there were many other demands. *Pelham,* the novel that made Bulwer Lytton's reputation (1828), is a series of almost disconnected studies in life and literature, not a romance. Tennyson's earlier poems show vivid inspiration and careful workmanship, but no sustained constructive effort. In prose this was a great age of essayists, made illustrious by the names of Macaulay, Carlyle, De Quincey, J. S. Mill, and John Wilson. Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1833–34) is not really a book, but a collection of unsystematic thoughts and disconnected images. The *French Revolution* (1837), indeed, is a great work of art, unequalled by anything that his contemporaries were then doing, or by anything that he himself did afterwards, for splendour, power, and unity; but it is an exception that proves the rule, being, in fact, a political pamphlet of the transcendent kind, the expression of a radicalism that would substitute, not individual liberty, but better and stronger government, for the rotten institutions of the past. The Lectures on *Hero-Worship* (1841) are generally supposed to represent Carlyle's leaning to autocracy as the only legitimate form of government. But, whatever their intention may have been, such is

not the moral they convey. With few exceptions the heroes are religious reformers, poets, men of letters, not men of action, exercising authority, not by force, but by persuasion. The two representative soldiers really serve as a warning against autocracy, for Cromwell totally fails to carry out his ideals in the absence of popular support; while Napoleon, possessing all that Cromwell wanted, has his head turned by uncontrolled dominion, deserts the democratic cause, and perishes by fighting against the laws of justice. Another marked trait of the Lectures is their silent, but probably not unconscious, hostility to the dreams of such enthusiasts for the mediæval Church as Hurrell Froude. Most of the heroes belong to Protestantism; the one mediæval Catholic, Dante, is only made interesting on the human and personal side, his theory of the world being dismissed as obsolete.

Carlyle's own religion at this time was a vague deism inherited from the previous century, combined with a particular hostility to the Tractarians for their attempt to rehabilitate superstition under forms more objectionable than any others to a Scotchman. Another Scotchman, George Combe, taught deism in a more undisguised form to a more popular audience in association with the alleged discoveries of phrenology. His idea of basing education and social reform on cranioscopy was a chimera; but he did good service by pointing to a healthy constitution of brain and body as the necessary condition of mental and moral improvement.

It is to be noticed how Scotchmen stood to the front in every scheme for benefiting the people by cultivating their intelligence. Besides his efforts

on behalf of State-aided education, Lord Brougham was the soul of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. The valuable publications of the Chambers brothers obtained a wide circulation in England as well as in Scotland ; and George Birkbeck, the founder of Mechanics' Institutes, himself a Yorkshireman, owed his enthusiasm for popular education to a prolonged residence in Scotland.

Such enterprises as Brougham's and Birkbeck's, beneficial as they were to the middle classes, left the mass of the labouring population untouched. For them the question was not how to live well, but how to live at all. Brougham had, rather pedantically, hoped the time might come when every cottager would read Bacon. Cobbett observed, with pertinent wit, that he had much rather see every cottager eat bacon. But the one wish seemed nearly as Utopian as the other. A cottager supporting himself, a wife, and five children on from seven to ten shillings a week had much difficulty in providing bare bread, with corn ranging from fifty to seventy shillings a quarter. Factory hands were better paid, and altogether the condition of the people had improved since the Regency; but their poverty was pitiable, and distress continued to be much aggravated from time to time by a bad harvest or a commercial crisis. The Reform Act had put an end to some great evils; but others remained unabated, and the decline of political excitement left public opinion more free to occupy itself with these. We shall see in the next chapter what ideas, more or less practical, more or less permanent, responded to the social demands of the age.

Chapter VIII.

IDEALS AND REALITIES

Of all schemes for the regeneration of mankind put forward during the Reform era, the most ambitious and far-reaching originated with Robert Owen (1770–1858). This man had raised himself by genius and conduct from the position of a petty trader to be the head of a great manufactory, and had relinquished that position in order to carry on a world-wide propaganda for his favourite ideas. He may be described as the father of modern Socialism. But his proposals for collective ownership differed widely from the State socialism of more recent times. For their realisation he looked not to government intervention, but to experiments in voluntary co-operation, aided to any extent at first starting by private or public munificence, in the confidence that, once started, they would prove self-supporting, and by successful competition would gradually free industry from the control of individualistic capital. As the foundation of the new social order he devised, and for several years actually put into practice among his own work-people at New Lanark, a peculiar system of education and discipline which replaced the study of words by the study of things, and the use of rewards and punishments by the use of moral suasion. Believing character to be the creature of circumstance, he held that to inflict pain on people

for what they could not help doing was unjust; but, as his methods proved perfectly successful at New Lanark, they might have been defended on grounds of simple expediency, without the intervention of metaphysical abstractions. In fact, Owen's personal magnetism, falling in with the grateful enthusiasm of the Scottish character, exhibited a happy coincidence not to be reckoned on by ordinary educators and rulers, nor even by such experts as Dr. Arnold of Rugby, who, we are told, did not govern by love, but by fear.

Owen ultimately gave up his position at New Lanark for the office of a public agitator, which he was much less fitted to fill. Believing in no existing religion and adhering to no recognised political party, his faith in Co-operation was such that, like some more recent reformers, he dreamed of combining all schools in the support of his educational and communistic schemes. As a natural consequence, the rest of his active life was spent in spinning ropes of sand. Men of the most discordant views—Archbishops and atheists, Radicals and reactionists—were induced to promise their support; but it never went beyond promises. Some important movements—Secularism, industrial co-operation, profit-sharing—may be traced back to his initiative; but these lie off the central line of English evolution as it was being unrolled when Peel came into power.

Chartism was of far more immediate practical importance than anything Owen ever said or did. It may be described as the resumption in a more systematic way of the agitation for Parliamentary

Reform begun under the Regency and temporarily arrested by the Whig measure of 1831–32. A document called the People's Charter, drawn up in 1838, put the extreme democratic claims into shape. Taken in the order of their importance, its articles were: Manhood suffrage, equal electoral districts, vote by ballot, annual Parliaments, abolition of the property qualification at that time required for members of the House of Commons, and instead thereof payment of them for their services. The leaders of the movement are deservedly forgotten, nor need their names be recorded here. The Chartists were as much inferior to Chartism as Owen was superior to the Owenites. They were, in truth, quack doctors drawing attention to a dangerous disease, and so winning a sort of confused sympathy from literary people, not always much more practical than themselves — Wordsworth, Carlyle, Harriet Martineau, and Benjamin Disraeli. Carlyle took hold of the agitation as a good stick to beat Benthamism with. But his own proposals for remedial legislation did not go beyond education and emigration. The one was advocated by every Benthamite, the other by J. S. Mill, the young chief of the school, from whom he had probably picked it up in conversation. Carlyle also gave a gruff approval to the new Poor Law, which the Chartists hated. Wordsworth, in whom the old revolutionary passion had never died out, preferred them to the Whigs, against whom Disraeli also hoped for their aid.

Macaulay put the Whig case against Chartism —which, in this instance, was the case of all sensible people—in one short speech with crushing

effect. According to him, the only demand of supreme importance was manhood suffrage. To grant that would be to place all the property of the kingdom at the mercy of men who proclaimed their intention of confiscating it if they gained the control of Parliament. He pointed out that, among the grievances which those who petitioned for the passing of the People's Charter expected to be redressed, payment of interest on the National Debt was expressly mentioned; and that the monopolies of machinery, of land, and of the means of travelling and transit were also quoted as injustices to be removed. Whence he concluded that to pass the Charter would bring irretrievable ruin on the country.[1]

As against the petitioners this reasoning was conclusive. But our experience of universal suffrage elsewhere has not gone to confirm Macaulay's gloomy anticipations of its probable effect if introduced into England. Where the voters are educated they have too much honesty and good sense to ask for the confiscation of private property. Where they are ignorant they go to the poll in disciplined masses at the bidding of party managers whose desire is rather to secure lucrative offices for themselves than to propose a general scramble for the instruments of production in which they might probably be crushed to death. If by a miracle the Chartist agitation had succeeded, the result might well have been a more complete victory for the reactionists than was won in 1841.

[1] Macaulay, *Miscellaneous Writings and Speeches,* vol. iii., p. 186.

Among the literary sympathisers with Chartism the name of Disraeli has been mentioned. Sympathy, as attributed to him, must not be understood in an emotional sense, for his attitude in reference to the Turkish atrocities forty years later proves that human suffering on a large scale left him absolutely callous. But he saw that, as opinion then set, to expatiate on the wrongs of the labouring poor was a convenient method for acquiring notoriety and power. For the rest, both then and afterwards he failed conspicuously, for one so clever, in forecasting the general trend of progressive ideas. A sort of dandified romanticism playing at the resuscitation of mediæval institutions in Church and State had been the fashion in his youth; and now in the late thirties, when it was waning before the light of science, Disraeli took it up in the spirit of a secondhand broker as a means for the reconstitution of the Tory party. A people maddened with hunger were invited to seek deliverance by rallying round the old aristocracy, the throne, and the altar. Owing to the exigencies of sentimental fiction, Scott and Bulwer Lytton had chosen very young men for their heroes; and Scott's youths, at least, were habitually associated with great affairs of State. Therefore, according to Disraeli, the country and its institutions were, in some mysterious way, to be now saved by its youth. Hence the party formed on his principles became known by the name, or nickname, of Young England. Whether the juniors were to be chiefly employed in the education of their elders, or in what is now called slumming among the cottagers on their fathers' estates, did

not seem clear. On no important political question could the Young Englanders be got to act together, not even on the maintenance of the Corn Laws, which Disraeli himself considered essential to the predominance of the landed interest, and therefore to the salvation of England. To stake the cause of the aristocracy on an odious food-tax showed a singular want of political sagacity in one who was negotiating an alliance between the nobles and the people.

A still greater blunder, if possible, was Disraeli's proposal, borrowed from Bolingbroke, to revive the power of the Crown. This, as Canning and Peel had foretold, proved incompatible with the authority exercised by a truly representative House of Commons; and neither the last independent political act of William IV. in sending for Sir Robert Peel, nor the first political act of the young Queen in refusing to accept Peel's terms, had tended to make royal interference more popular than before.

Disraeli and his young friends seem to have agreed in thinking that they could win over public opinion to recognise the Church of England as a body invested with theocratic powers. No idea could well have been more chimerical. It ran counter to all the traditions of English statesmanship. And the failure of the Tractarian Movement showed it to be particularly ill-timed at that moment. By making national education impossible the Church as a corporation proved herself the people's worst enemy; and the new science was rapidly paralysing her hold on the educated intelligence of the country.

It is remarkable how closely Disraeli, himself a Jew, agreed with Keble in resting the Church's theocratic pretensions on the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures; how they both dreaded Biblical criticism; and how the apostle of Young England gibes at the doctrine of evolution in *Tancred,* his religious romance of 1847, no less scornfully than in his address to the Church Congress of 1865.

Finally, after all these dissolving dreams, we come to the only movement of the late thirties that was practical, progressive, successful, and permanent. This was the agitation for the free importation of corn, conducted by the Anti-Corn-Law League, and associated for ever in the memory of Englishmen with the name of Richard Cobden.

The part played by Cobden and the League in their campaign against the Corn Laws has somewhat interfered with a right apprehension of the history of Free Trade in England. Cobden, of course, condemned all commercial restrictions on principle and as a matter of policy for his own country and for the whole world. But he was not the first by a good many to preach that principle in its entirety, or to make it the keynote of a successful policy. Plato, who created political economy, also held that imports should be untaxed; the French physiocrats, Adam Smith, and Ricardo placed his *aperçus* on a scientific basis, after whom came statesmen like Shelburne, Pitt, Canning, and Huskisson to carry them into practice. It happened that the new policy of more or less

withdrawing artificial protection from native industry was applied in the first instance to manufactures, because England, as a great corn-growing country, did not need to import foreign grain. Agriculture did, indeed, receive what was called protection ; but this took the form of giving bounties on the exportation of corn. It was hoped that the bounties, by creating an artificial dearth, would raise prices at home ; but as they stimulated production the actual effect was that prices fell. The importation of foreign corn had indeed been prohibited since the time of Charles II.; but, as plenty generally prevailed, the prohibition was not felt as a grievance.

With the industrial revolution and the rapid growth of population a change set in. Prices rose with the new demand for food ; and a series of laws passed in the interest of the landowners pushed up the limit on the sliding scale of scarcity until foreign wheat was practically refused admission so long as English wheat stood at less than eighty shillings a quarter. To admit it even then hardly relieved the distress ; for in the uncertainty of finding a market the foreign grain-merchants did not care to lay in stores which England might or might not be pleased to buy.

It was thought that a real representation of the people would put an end to such exactions ; and the distress during the early years of peace produced, for the first time, a widespread demand for Parliamentary Reform. Liberty, in Shelley's phrase, meant—

> Clothes and fire and food
> For the trampled multitude

—a reason the more why it should be refused by the men in power. In other directions, however, concessions were made to the industrial interest even by an unreformed Parliament. Taxes on the raw material of manufactures were partially repealed, and reciprocity was substituted for the restrictions formerly placed on foreign shipping, while the duties on imported manufactures were vastly reduced. This was done by a nominally Tory Ministry. The Whigs of 1830 were Free Traders in theory; but they had neither leisure nor ability to do anything beyond reducing the paper duties. A series of good harvests postponed the Corn Law question for some years longer.

So matters remained until the terrible distress of 1837, continued and aggravated through the next five years, made the condition of the people the one all-absorbing interest of politics and literature. Owenites, Chartists, Young Englanders, agitators for the repeal of the new Poor Law, agreed in assuming that there was wealth enough in the country to afford a comfortable subsistence all round if only it were better distributed, by private or public charity, or by voluntary or compulsory Socialism. The scientific economists alone showed how the national wealth could be both increased and better distributed by granting complete Free Trade. According to them, the Corn Laws did mischief in more than one way, directly by raising the price of bread, indirectly by checking our foreign trade and diverting capital from investments where it could be turned to the best account to investments where it was turned to the least account. At home capital was diverted from the

manufacturing industries in which we excelled all other nations to agriculture, where, by the law of diminishing returns, not only was there less profit to begin with, but that profit was always growing less and less for equal amounts of capital expended on the soil. Abroad the reverse process obtained. The nations which would gladly have grown more corn wherewith to buy our cloths and calicoes, finding that we refused it, built factories of their own and set up prohibitory tariffs to guard their new industries against our cheaper goods. It was contended that the repeal of the Corn Laws would enlarge the field of employment for English labour and capital by giving a new stimulus both to the import and to the export trade.

The Protectionists did not deny all this, but they argued that to make England dependent on foreign countries for her food-supplies would be most hazardous ; that to draw the peasantry away from the country to the towns would injure the national physique ; that to lower the price of corn would be to lower rents, which was an act of confiscation—at the expense, too, of the class to whom England owed all her greatness.

To keep the people in a chronic state of want and misery seemed a rather costly insurance against the risk of future famine in the highly improbable contingency of our being at war with all the corn-producing countries of the world at the same time ; and the middle classes, whom Reform had made sovereign, believed that they, rather than the noble lords who called robbery property, were the brain and backbone of England. Their wealth and energy had, in fact, brought us safely out of the

wars undertaken and misconducted by the ruling territorial aristocracy. And the literary leader of Young England, the political bravo of the high Tory party—Disraeli—himself admitted that the condition of the agricultural poor was even worse than that of the factory operatives.

So stood the balance of argument. In Parliament, and probably in the country, the balance of opinion stood heavily against Free Trade. But the progress of Liberalism had removed the restrictions by which reason used to be prevented from turning itself into public opinion, and had created a machinery by which the opinion of the people could turn itself more rapidly into the opinion of Parliament. In 1836 an Anti-Corn Law Association was founded in London by some Benthamites, and another of the same name two years later at Manchester, which in 1839 became the Anti-Corn Law League. This body carried on an agitation of unexampled magnitude all over the country, collecting enormous sums of money, assembling crowded meetings to hear addresses in favour of Free Trade, disseminating Free Trade pamphlets and leaflets by tens of thousands, prompting the acquisition of electoral qualifications by Free Traders, contesting Protectionist votes on the register, fighting Protectionist candidates at by-elections, making Free Trade motions in Parliament, appealing, and at last not in vain, to the all-powerful Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, to repeat what he had done for Catholic Emancipation, sacrificing the interests of his party to the interests of his country, which this time were the interests of all mankind.

At what precise date Peel's conversion to complete Free Trade took place is uncertain, and of no interest to anyone but his biographers. His adherence to Protection had long been avowedly a matter more of expediency than of principle. His first Budget embodied a rather complicated arrangement, which had the effect of lowering the corn duties to one half of what they had previously been; and this was accompanied by a large remission of protective duties on manufactured articles. Three years later, by a comprehensive scheme of Tariff Reform in the true sense, 430 articles were relieved of import duties, and all duties on British exports were repealed.

Disraeli at first applauded Peel for taking up what he then chose to describe as the genuine Tory policy—the policy of Pitt. When the Conservative Administration of 1841 was being formed he had applied for office, and had been refused. Perhaps he still hoped to conciliate the Prime Minister by this unexpected support. If so, he was mistaken. Then he turned to the extreme Tories, who were becoming mutinous at the growing liberality of their middle-class chief. They had another grievance besides the reformed tariff. In 1845 Peel proposed and carried an augmentation of the grant to Maynooth, a training college for Irish Roman Catholic priests. Judged by the ideas of that age, it was a statesmanlike measure, and it received the support of Cobden and Macaulay. But to subsidise the priests agreed better with Whig than with Tory traditions; nor could such a grant have been carried against the No Popery wing of the Conservative party without the aid

of Liberal votes. Then the unscrupulous and desperate adventurer saw and seized his chance. In a series of speeches unrivalled for picturesque sarcasm, Disraeli taunted Peel with having stolen the Whigs' clothes while they were bathing, with treating the landed interest like a cast-off mistress, with turning Conservatism into an organised hypocrisy. The Prime Minister's mind was one vast Appropriation Clause; he resembled the Turkish Admiral who steered his fleet right into the enemy's port. After the most virulent of these attacks Peel asked why, then, had the honourable gentleman wished to serve under one of whom, by his own account, his opinion had always been so bad. Disraeli replied that he had never made any such request. Sir Robert quietly repeated his assertion, but refrained even in that emergency from producing the written evidence of his treacherous assailant's falsehood; and the damning letter remained unpublished until nearly half a century after his death.

Stuart absolutism received its mortal blow from the Irish insurrection of 1641. Irish agitation broke up the reactionary Toryism of Peel's youth. Irish famine was now to ruin the Protectionist Conservatism of his triumphant prime. Our unequalled aristocratic government, which made the Irish bigoted Romanists in the seventeenth century, and destroyed Irish manufactures in the eighteenth century, had in the nineteenth century completed its fatal work by the utter degradation of Irish agriculture. For want of any other outlet the whole industry of the country was thrown on the

land; and the landlords, in order to multiply the electors who voted at their dictation, had subdivided the land among the greatest possible number of tenant-farmers holding their little plots at a rack-rent. These men had no capital and no motive to improve the land, as their improvements, if any, were liable to confiscation under the form of an increased rent. Many landlords lived away from their estates, delegating their authority to merciless agents, or letting them out in large farms on leases to middlemen who sublet them to a swarm of tenants-at-will, living themselves like gentlemen on what they could extract from these miserable serfs. As a means of subsistence the peasants were given a small piece of land, on which they raised a scanty crop. Potatoes were the food that could be grown in the greatest abundance with the smallest amount of labour. Potatoes accordingly became the staple food of the people. The system resulted in a rapid growth of population, thus increasing the competition for land and placing the poor more and more at the mercy of the rich. Those who could not pay their rent were turned out on the highways to starve. Until 1838 there was no Poor Law for Ireland; the system then introduced did not sanction the distribution of outdoor relief, and the workhouses had not sufficient accommodation for the mass of pauperism thrown on them in times of distress.

A Commission appointed by Peel "to investigate the conditions on which Irish land was held" reported in favour of compensating evicted tenants for improvements made by them with the permission of authorities appointed for the purpose; and a

measure giving partial effect to its recommendations was laid before the House of Lords in 1845, but excited so much opposition on the ground of invading the rights of property that it had to be withdrawn almost without discussion.[1] Apparently the Young Englanders had not educated their fathers up to the point of enabling them to see on which side, in this instance, as in the instance of the Corn Laws, the rights of property were to be found.

A people so circumstanced and thrown for subsistence on a single esculent are exposed to famine whenever, as frequently happens with the potato, their staple food is ruined by bad weather or by disease. The autumn of 1845 was rainy, and a new form of blight destroyed the potato crop. Free importation of corn became a necessity. Lord John Russell, who had hitherto advocated a fixed eight-shilling duty on foreign corn, now, by a public declaration, committed the Whig party to Free Trade. Peel had already been converted by Cobden's exposure of the miseries that Protection entailed on the English agricultural population. He proposed the immediate suspension of the Corn Laws, to be followed by their gradual abolition. At his first Cabinet Council all but three members dissented ; at the second, held in December, all but two agreed. What made the services of those two indispensable does not appear ; but anyhow Peel resigned. The Queen sent for Russell, who accepted, but failed to form an Administration, for the very odd reason that Lord Grey, the Reform

[1] Spencer Walpole's *History of England,* vol. v., p. 127.

Minister's son, had to be included, and that he would not sit in the same Cabinet with Lord Palmerston, who could not be left out. Peel returned to office, having in the meantime converted one of his late recalcitrant colleagues. The other, Lord Stanley, remaining obstinate, was replaced by W. E. Gladstone. At that time the future Liberal leader sat for a nomination borough in the gift of the Duke of Newcastle. The Duke now handed it over to a Tory, at the same time ousting his own son, Lord Lincoln, Peel's Irish Secretary, from the representation of South Notts. Lincoln remained out of Parliament for three months, and Gladstone for eighteen months. This was the same Duke that justified his eviction of tenants who voted against his candidates by asking had he not a right to do as he liked with his own. The Dukes of Richmond and Buckingham pursued a similarly obstructive policy in preventing Free Trade Ministers from retaining their seats. So much for the claim to altruism put forward on behalf of the landowning oligarchy by its modern apologists.

Peel did not introduce immediate or complete Free Trade. He proposed to retain for the next three years a duty on foreign corn varying inversely as the home price from ten to four shillings per quarter, after which it was to remain fixed at a shilling per quarter. Duties on manufactured goods were reduced from twenty to ten per cent., and on half-manufactured goods to five per cent., while the duty on raw material was entirely abolished. Abolished also was the duty on live stock and dead meat; the duties on butter, cheese,

and hops were lowered fifty per cent.; the differential duty against slave-grown sugar still continued, but in a diminished amount, as likewise did the duties on timber and tallow.

In the speech that introduced these great changes Peel touched on the question of reciprocity, or what is now called Fair Trade. He explained that his own policy had been adopted in complete independence of what foreign countries were doing or would do. He admitted that since our departure from Protection their tariffs, instead of being lowered, had in some instances been raised against English goods. But he parried this consideration by the fact that during the same period our export trade had increased. And he used the one fact to explain the other. The Protectionist countries were injuring themselves by their system of exclusion, and therefore their manufacturers could not resist the competition of our less fettered industry.[1] That our example would eventually tell on their governments he did indeed believe, but without staking his credit on the fulfilment of that prediction. And had a vision of the world's industrial history for the next sixty years unfolded itself before his gaze, we have no reason to think that the great Minister would have gone back on his adhesion to the principles of the Anti-Corn Law League. Precisely the same remark applies to Cobden. He anticipated a coming era of universal Free Trade. But he never argued for the abolition of the corn tax on the ground that it would be followed by a world-wide economic revolution, or

[1] Sir Robert Peel, *Speeches,* vol. iv., p. 601.

hinted at an admission that England would be worse off than before if other countries refused to follow in her footsteps.

It has been asked why Free Trade did not immediately lower the price of corn. The fact is so; but we must remember that the harvests for some years previously had been exceptionally good, and that the cheapness thus introduced was at least maintained; that a quite appreciable duty continued to be levied until 1849; and that foreign corn-growers needed some time to make arrangements for supplying the English market. When sufficient time had elapsed for the new demand to operate the price fell to an unprecedented extent.

Peel's Budget was carried by a coalition of Conservative Free Traders and Liberals, the House of Lords not daring to resist. But that victory was his Trafalgar. On the night when the Corn Bill passed the Lords his Ministry fell before a factious combination of Liberals and Protectionists in the Commons. English misgovernment had led to famine in Ireland, famine to outrage, and outrage to a new Coercion Bill, one article of which rendered any person found out of doors at night in a proclaimed district liable to transportation. At this time the Conservative party had split into two. Less than a third followed Peel; the others, who still clung to Protection, placed themselves under the leadership of Lord George Bentinck, an ignorant racing man with a head for figures, who allowed himself to be made the tool of Disraeli's ambition, while at the same time he gratified a relentless thirst for vengeance on one whom he believed to have been the cause of his

kinsman Canning's death. Bentinck and his followers had voted for the first reading of the Coercion Bill; they opposed the second reading on a frivolous pretext, and by combining with those who had resisted it from the beginning placed the Government in a minority of seventy-three. Peel resigned, and was succeeded by Lord John Russell at the head of a purely Whig Administration, including Grey and Palmerston, who by this time had contrived to make up the difference that had been found insuperable only six months before.

The Free Trade question introduced new lines of party cleavage on the Liberal as well as on the Conservative side. Some Whigs—Lord Melbourne among the number—believed in Protection. Some of the ablest Tories—Gladstone for one—followed Peel when he forsook it. The Benthamites, who had been the first Free Traders, were more or less Freethinkers, and so as a rule were the Foxite Whigs. The League habitually appealed to Christian charity against the policy of commercial restrictions, and its three greatest orators were men of deep religious conviction, combined, it is true, with very liberal religious opinions—Cobden, the most persuasive, as a Churchman; John Bright, the most powerful, as a Quaker; W. J. Fox, the most brilliant, as a Unitarian minister. The Anglican clergy were Protectionists almost to a man; Thomas Spencer, Herbert Spencer's uncle, being one of the very few exceptions. This seems to have been due to their connection with the landlord class. The Wesleyan ministers, from whatever reason, held the same opinions. But a great

conference of Nonconformist ministers assembled at Manchester in 1841 passed resolutions condemnatory of the tax on corn, as did also similar conferences at Edinburgh and Carnarvon.[1] This association of Nonconformity with Liberal politics has probably contributed to its subsequent development on lines of increased dogmatic liberality.

Another consequence of the Free Trade movement was the growing identification of Radicalism with a policy of peace, non-intervention, and disarmament. There had been a connection of the same sort before, but it was rather accidental than essential. The wars with America and with the French Republic had been or had looked like wars against popular government; and the war with Napoleon, although fought partly in self-defence and partly on behalf of European liberty, had contributed to the aggrandisement of the plutocracy in England. A great change took place with the revolutionary movement of 1820, as a consequence of which England under Canning definitely took sides with the cause of free nationalities in Europe and America. This made Liberal opinion more favourable to armed intervention in the affairs of other countries, while absolutist Tories, with Wellington at their head, advocated a policy of neutrality and strict respect for treaty rights.

Among the Canningites who coalesced with Lord Grey in 1830 the ablest and most vigorous was Lord Palmerston, who held the post of Foreign Secretary with a break of only a few months down

[1] Molesworth, *History of England,* vol. ii., p. 216; Morley, *Life of Cobden,* vol. i., p. 232.

to the Whig defeat of 1841. He steadily carried on the tradition of his old chief, extending the power and prestige of England by the support he gave to constitutional government in Belgium and Southern Europe, by his resistance to French and Russian ambition in the Near East, and, more questionably, by his aggressive action in the Far East. His greatest successes were won by diplomatic pressure, with the help of very little fighting. But his Turkish policy, brilliant as it was, had been carried out at the risk of war with France and with the certainty of prolonging for an indefinite period the blighting tyranny of the Sultan over some of the fairest regions on the globe. Its immediate success proved highly prejudicial to our own interests in Asia. For, as a counter-move to Palmerston's opposition on the Bosporus, Russia raised up enemies against us in Afghanistan ; and, finally, the blundering of the Indian Government brought on a war with that country signalised by the most frightful disaster that has ever befallen a British army, the annihilation of Elphinstone's force in the Khyber Pass.

While these deplorable events were happening on the north-west frontier of India we were carrying on a still more disgraceful war with China. When the Charter of the East India Company expired, in 1833, the Chinese trade was thrown open to all British merchants, and many of them used the opportunity thus offered to introduce large quantities of opium into China, although its importation was forbidden by the Chinese Government. As might have been expected, collisions of a more and more violent character occurred between the

officials on both sides; and, although Lord Palmerston gave orders that the Emperor's prohibition of the traffic in a pernicious drug should be respected, they were not obeyed. Finally, the Chinese Commissioner in Canton insisted on the surrender and destruction of all the British opium in China, valued at some millions sterling. Unfortunately, a part of the Indian revenue, too large to be spared, depended on the opium monopoly, and the value of this again depended on keeping the Chinese market open. Our people treated the destruction of the smuggled opium-chests as an outrage to be avenged by war, and war accordingly ensued. After some years of fighting, chequered by the usual disasters, it ended with the submission of our helpless opponents. China had to pay compensation for the opium destroyed and a heavy indemnity besides. Certain ports were opened to British trade, and, although the importation of opium was not yet legalised, no very energetic resistance to it could be expected from the Chinese authorities after such bitter experience of what came from meddling with its freedom.

At the conclusion of peace Lord Ashley, whose acquaintance we have already made as a defender of the defenceless, wrote in his private journal: "It may be unpatriotic, it may be un-British, I cannot rejoice in our successes; we have triumphed in one of the most lawless, unnecessary, and unfair struggles in the records of history." Next year he moved a resolution in the House of Commons condemnatory of the trade in opium as, among other evils, "destructive of all relations of amity between England and China," but withdrew his

motion at the entreaty of Sir Robert Peel, who "indulged in a deprecatory argument of which the gist seemed to be that, as we could not put down gin at home, we need not concern ourselves about introducing 20,000 chests of opium into China every year."[1]

In 1836 Cobden had published a pamphlet criticising Palmerston's policy of supporting Turkey against Russia, and generally advocating the principle of non-intervention. We do not hear that he or Bright took any part in opposing the Afghan and Chinese wars, or that they supported Lord Ashley in his attack on the opium trade, probably because all their energies were then absorbed in the Free Trade struggle. When Free Trade triumphed those energies became available for a wider policy, and the late chiefs of the League proved, by their opposition to the Russian war and the second Chinese war, that the principles of international justice and peace had become an integral part of their creed. They valued trade, but not the extension of trade by violence and chicane.

It was not only in the Levant, in the Far East, or in Ireland, that the interests of justice and mercy collided with the interests of national vainglory or plutocratic greed. I have already touched on the history of factory legislation, and in that connection I have shown with how little truth an exclusive claim has been set up on behalf of Toryism for the merit of intervening to protect the helpless sufferers

[1] Hodder, *Life of Lord Shaftesbury*, vol. i., p. 475.

against their taskmasters. Lord Ashley complained with reason of the extent to which the Whig Government of 1833 had limited his scheme for the prohibition of child-labour in factories, and again in 1836 of the imperfect way in which the law actually passed was allowed to work. But Peel had not been long in power before the great philanthropist discovered that less was to be hoped for from him and from his colleagues than from their predecessors. "This Government," he writes in his private diary, "is ten times more hostile to my views than the last, and they carry it *(sic)* out in a manner far more severe and embarrassing."[1]

In August, 1840, Ashley obtained a Commission to inquire into the employment of children in mines and collieries. Its first report appeared in May, 1842, unveiling a mass of misery and depravity that left the evils of factory labour far behind, and approached the horrors of the African slave-trade. The Home Office tried, but failed, first to keep back the report, and then to prevent its sale. This time public opinion was fairly roused, and Ashley's Bill to forbid the labour of women and children in coal-pits passed both Houses in the same Session, unsupported by the Government, received with coldness by the Lords, and nearly wrecked by their amendments, one of the worst being due to the Marquess of Londonderry, a high Tory peer.

By an Act passed in 1844 children were forbidden to work in factories under the age of nine, and to work for more than six hours and a-half a day under thirteen. Ashley proposed a ten-hour day

[1] *Life*, vol. i., p. 409.

for young persons from thirteen to twenty-one, but failed to carry his amendment. His supporters were mostly Conservatives, whom we may not uncharitably conjecture to have been in some degree animated by hatred of the manufacturers; but he also carried with him such representative Whigs as Russell, Palmerston, and Macaulay. By his own account, his "strength lay at first among the Radicals, the Irishmen, and a few sincere Whigs and Conservatives."[1] Members of the League suspected the sincerity of a philanthropist who voted for taxing the people's bread, and who showed no interest in the woes of the labourers on his father's Dorsetshire estate. Lord Ashley set himself right with the Free Traders by accepting total repeal, but lost his seat in consequence, and remained out of Parliament for years. During his absence the conduct of the Ten Hours Bill was entrusted to John Fielden, a cotton manufacturer, a Radical, and a Unitarian. After one more defeat it passed both Houses by large majorities in 1847, many Conservatives, according to Ashley, taking this opportunity of revenging themselves on Peel and the League.[2] Further legislation in 1850 and 1853, carried by Liberal Ministers, gave fresh protection to women and children against overwork. The same principle has since been more widely extended and safeguarded with the co-operation of both parties, and individual statesmen who were once opposed to it have admitted that they were mistaken. That the Tories should claim this as a triumph for themselves is even more

[1] *Life*, vol. ii., p. 209.

[2] *Life*, vol. ii., p. 202.

absurd than their now abandoned claim to the championship of Free Trade. Both are particular applications of Bentham's supreme principle—the greatest happiness of the greatest number—which no single rule either of interference or of non-interference can exhaust.

Lord Ashley complains that at first only a single minister of religion supported him, and even to the last very few.[1] He is distressed and puzzled "to find support from infidels or non-professors; opposition or coldness from religionists or declaimers." He points out that in the war with Scinde (1842) all the bad faith was on the side of the Christian conquerors, the vain appeals to justice on the side of the Mohammedan Ameers,[2] as previously, after the Opium War, that "Christians had shed more heathen blood in two years than heathens had shed of Christian blood in two centuries";[3] hears also with disgust that "many persons of *piety* defend and practise slavery" in America.[4] Yet, according to him, the salvation of the English poor depended on their being given a religious education, and a dogmatic one at that. Sir James Graham's abortive Factory Bill of 1843 contained provisions, more or less compulsory, for the education of the half-time children, the schools to be mainly under clerical control. Dissenters and Roman Catholics not unreasonably objected to a scheme for practically handing over the factory children to the tuition of the Church of England. Graham sought to con-

[1] *Life*, vol. ii., p. 202.
[2] *Ibid*, vol. ii., p. 11.
[3] *Ibid*, vol. i., pp. 440-41.
[4] *Ibid*, p. 448.

ciliate them—vainly, as the event proved—by directing that Bible teaching should be limited to reading the text, without note or comment. For the sake of peace, Ashley accepted this arrangement, but described it as "leaving a Socinian in Socinian ignorance, and a Socialist in Socialist impurities," and spoke of himself as feeling "a nausea almost to faintness" at having to gulp it down.[1]

Lord Ashley was, for an Evangelical, exceptionally statesmanlike and tolerant. But, besides objecting to simple Bible teaching, he passionately opposed Peel's increased grant to Maynooth College, and in this he not only represented the opinion of Peel's own party, but the prevailing opinion of Great Britain. For having supported the grant, Macaulay, otherwise a most popular candidate, lost his seat at Edinburgh in the general election of 1847. Up to 1847 English Roman Catholic schools were refused a share in the education grant. In that year the injustice was removed, not without violent opposition from Lord Ashley and the Wesleyans, at the motion of Sir William Molesworth,[2] a Benthamite, who probably had no religious belief — a suspicion also attaching to Macaulay.

Thus once more, as in the previous decade, we find theological prejudices opposing a barrier to educational progress which the most disinterested benevolence could not overcome, which had to be met by a radical change in the intellectual con-

[1] *Life*, vol. i., p. 461.
[2] Mrs. Fawcett, *Life of Sir W. Molesworth*, p. 262.

victions of the people. After studying the English political and social revolution, we must now return to trace the course of that scientific, philosophical, and critical movement whose still unexhausted impulses are continuing to bear us forward towards new horizons at the present day.

Chapter IX.

THE MASTER-BUILDERS

During the earlier part of the nineteenth century a strong interest in Bacon's philosophy may be observed among the young Liberals of the period. It led them to conceive the discoveries and inventions of their own age as part of a general movement in which political reform represented no more than a single line of advance. But it soon appeared that the great Chancellor's work had all to be done over again. Sir John Herschel's *Discourse on the Study of Natural Philosophy,* published in 1830, showed, by its analysis of the experimental methods, what Bacon, not being himself an expert, could not know—that is, how scientific discoveries are actually made. It was followed, in 1837, by Whewell's *History of the Inductive Sciences,* a work which, although imperfect and in some parts retrograde, had the merit of suggesting still more forcibly the idea of science as one vast and connected body of doctrine. J. S. Mill acknowledges that, without the facts brought together by Whewell, his own *Logic* would not have been written.

Besides these products of native thought, a potent foreign influence, acting in the same direction, suddenly came into play. The earlier volumes of Auguste Comte's *Philosophie Positive* were appearing in Paris at this time, and speedily attracted the notice of some influential British

thinkers. Comte taught that the earliest social institutions were founded on theological conceptions of nature, on the belief that all phenomena are the product of personal volitions. Personal government and militarism go together with such views. Next comes a metaphysical or transitional period, in which abstract entities take the place of gods or of God as the explanation of whatever happens to us or about us. Finally, with the discovery that phenomena result from the invariable properties of matter acting by fixed laws of co-existence and succession, begins the positive or scientific stage of human progress, the maturity and perfection of society. Theologies, monarchies, and militarism, already undermined by metaphysical criticism, are destined to disappear in that ultimate stage, being replaced by a systematic intelligence of the world, founded on observation and reasoning, enabling us to foresee and provide for the future, and accompanied by a peaceful reorganisation of society on an industrial basis. The object of Comte's Positive Philosophy is to replace the dogmatic summaries of mediæval Catholicism and the abstract metaphysical systems of a later day by a conspectus of the fundamental sciences arranged in their logical order, with a general account of their methods, principles, and laws. At the summit of the series is placed the new science of sociology, which Comte claims as his own special creation. In a masterly survey of universal history he traces the development of society through the growth and decline of theology and war up to the dawn of an age when science and industry shall reign supreme.

Mill had been prepared to accept Comte's philosophy in so far as it agreed with what was permanent in eighteenth-century rationalism and what was progressive in nineteenth-century historical romanticism, by a study of the great Scottish thinkers, and by a similar though less complete training in modern science. He had long been preparing a systematic work on logic; it was completed almost simultaneously with the appearance of Comte's last volume, and incorporated some of the Frenchman's views, with qualifications rendering them less offensive to English prejudices. Mill accepts the law of the Three Stages, but tries to show that the belief in a fixed order of nature is quite compatible with the belief in a personal Creator, although in private he made no secret of not sharing that belief himself. In another way, however, Mill's *System of Logic* is more hostile to theology even than Comte's Positivism. Comte is so occupied with laws that he seems to overlook their true relation to causes. How phenomena are produced, he tells us, is beyond the power of man to know. All we know or need know is the order of their appearance. But no dogmatic pronouncements of the kind can prevent people from speculating on the subject; and the most effectual way to satisfy their curiosity is to show, as Mill shows, by an analysis of the idea itself, that causation means no more than unconditional antecedence. If something happens, something else will happen, and so on for ever. In order that something may happen, something else must have happened immediately before it, and so back for ever. What we say of any one event

may be said with as good reason of any other event as a happening, and therefore of the whole world conceived as a vast process of change. Mill calls this the "Law of Universal Causation." He expresses it by saying: "The state of the whole universe at any instant we believe to be the consequence of its state at the previous instant, insomuch that one who knew all the agents which exist at the present moment, their collocation in space, and all their properties—in other words, the laws of their agency—could predict the whole subsequent history of the universe."[1] This belief alone makes scientific induction possible; and when we talk about a reign of law, no more and no less than the reign of universal causation is implied.

Mill's philosophy goes beyond Comte's Positivism, and first gives it a solid foundation. No volitions, human or divine, interrupt the universal orderly sequence: volitions enter into it at most as links in an unbroken chain of causation. Nor is there any need to assume a First Cause for the world as a whole. For the law applies only to change, to what demonstrably has a beginning, not to the totality of things in which changes occur.[2]

According to Mill, we know this great truth, like every other truth, by experience alone—by having observed in numberless cases that every change has been preceded by another change, that in the same circumstances the same antecedent is followed by the same consequent, that no change

[1] *Logic,* bk. iii., chap. v., section 8.

[2] This is first brought out in the essay on *Theism,* published after Mill's death; but it can be read between the lines of the *Logic.*

has ever been shown to occur without an antecedent. Even the laws of arithmetic and geometry have no other proof than the evidence of unbroken experience in their favour.

While philosophers were setting forth the first principles of science in terms of such comprehensive generality, science was working up from the detailed investigation of particular phenomena, by the methods of experiment and reasoning, to generalisations almost as wide in their scope. Beginning in 1815, Michael Faraday, the greatest experimentalist of that or any age, had carried on a long series of researches, in the course of which he rediscovered what was already known on the Continent—that magnetism may be produced by electricity; and discovered for the first time that electricity may be produced from magnetism, both electricity and magnetism from mechanical motion, and mechanical motion from both, the resulting amounts of energy being always proportioned to the amounts expended elsewhere. He also succeeded in correlating magnetism with light, which had long been known as a product of electricity and of chemical affinity.

It is from this correlation of the physical forces, first completely established by Faraday, that our whole system of electric lighting and electro-motor machinery, destined ultimately to purify the air from smoke, has taken rise. Its consequences in the world of thought have been even more momentous. From the idea of correlation was deduced the still higher idea of conservation, the principle that the quantity of energy in existence

always remains constant, none being ever created or destroyed. This truth, first enunciated by Mohr, a German savant, in 1837, was rediscovered by Grove five years later, and made the subject of lectures delivered before the London Institution in 1842–43, but not published as a book until 1846. At the same time another English physicist, Joule, was ascertaining, by exact experimental measurement, the mechanical equivalent of heat.

Mill himself always remained rather sceptical about the philosophical value of these researches. But for younger thinkers they had the supreme importance of giving scientific precision to his own, or rather Laplace's, law of universal causation. It must be noticed in this connection that the idea of conservation did not become the common property even of the most highly educated classes until about 1858.

Assuming universal causation to be true, organic evolution follows from it as a necessary consequence. Geology shows that there was a time when the present species of plants and animals did not exist. They must therefore have originated either directly from their inorganic elements, or by a process of gradual variation from pre-existing species. All experience goes against spontaneous generation, all experience testifies to gradual variation; therefore the second alternative is adopted. We saw how, before the end of the eighteenth century, Erasmus Darwin enunciated the doctrine of evolution; but its first systematic exposition in the English language did not appear till 1844. This was a book called *Vestiges of the*

Natural History of Creation, by Robert Chambers, an Edinburgh bookseller. Chambers was not a scientific expert, nor altogether an original thinker, but he had studied scientific literature to better purpose than any professor, and he brought together a mass of evidence going to show that the solar system, the earth's crust, the organic world, and human civilisation had been gradually developed under the action of natural forces.

Throughout, the author's attitude towards religion is most conciliatory. Development is exhibited as another proof of design, and therefore as a fresh argument in favour of theism—the very position occupied by Bishop Temple forty years later, and now accepted by most theologians. It is also "reconciled" with Scripture, with no worse, if with no better, success than geology had been "reconciled" before it. Nevertheless, the *Vestiges* raised a storm, and probably would have ruined the bookselling business of the Chambers brothers if Robert's connection with it had not been kept a close secret. People had not yet been taught that evolution leaves Christianity stronger than ever; they thought that to admit man's development from a lower animal would seriously shake the assurance of his possessing an immortal soul; nor did they relish the prospect of his being superseded in the lordship of earth by some higher animal—or what a German plagiarist of English ideas has since called the superman. Modern science has added fresh arguments for evolution to those employed by Chambers; but the considerations that now recommend it to popular audiences are no other than those urged in the *Vestiges*. If in

two generations they have come to exercise a more persuasive influence, this is not least because the resisting power of theology has been weakened by internal decay.

English literature has often presented under an imaginative form the criticism of what is mischievous or rotten in real life, and the endeavour to replace it by nobler constructions of an ideal type. Perhaps for this reason great reforming periods seem less favourable to great literature than periods of reaction or stagnation. We have seen how literature bloomed in the dismal epochs of 1799 and 1817, and how it declined under Canning and Brougham; we have now to glance at its rebirth in the magnificent early Victorian period, when Melbourne's policy was to let things alone, when Peel's policy was to delay reforms until they commended themselves to the agricultural mind. All the great writers of that age were more or less hostile to such quiescence, to such procrastination; all were animated by a discontent more or less divine. We know some of them best in their later days, tamed by wealth and honour, thankful to rest themselves and a little impatient with the restlessness of their juniors. We look on Macaulay as a placid Whig, on Carlyle as a foe to modern Liberalism. But Macaulay was to some extent a Radical, and in India a great reformer; Carlyle was ready with "plenty of Radicalism," though not quite of Mill's sort, if Mill had made him editor of the *London Review*. We remember Tennyson as a timid Conservative, and Browning as a fantastic antiquarian. But the young Tennyson

gloried in change and novelty as such; all his hopes were for a future that should not be like the past. He bids the bells—

> Ring out the old, ring in the new,
> Ring out the false, ring in the true;

his heart is with the workers who are "ever reaping something new"; he goes with advancing science, and looks forward to an age of universal peace. To the same effect, but with more swing and power, Browning exclaims:—

> 'Tis time
> New hopes should animate the world, new light
> Should dawn from new revealings on a race
> Weighed down so long, forgotten so long.

For Browning also, like Burns and Keats, beneficent action rather than poetry was the ideal. Genius, he tells us in *Sordello*, is given to make mankind act, not to amuse them by seeing its possessor act each of them.[1] Carlyle had the same passion for work in preference to words, and could no more satisfy it than Browning. It turned with him to a glorification of great rulers; with Browning it vanished before a philosophy that glorified love as the only good in the world.

If Carlyle ever had hopes of an office under government, they must have perished with the advent of Sir Robert Peel to power. He replied to the Conservative reaction by editing the *Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell,* practically a vindication of England's greatest ruler against both Whigs and Tories, and at the same time a vindication of Puritanism against the Oxford Movement. Lord Melbourne's fall may be thanked on stronger

[1] *Works,* vol. i., p. 155 (the seventeen-volume edition).

grounds for two other monumental contributions to historical Liberalism. Grote was left free by his retirement from Parliament to go on with his History of Greece; and Macaulay was left free by the loss of office to go on with his History of England. Grote's work has been called a pamphlet in twelve volumes in defence of Athenian democracy. Macaulay's History never developed the full proportions contemplated by its author, but the fragment he achieved told, so far as it went, against the Legitimist absolutism brought into fashion by the Tractarian and Romantic currents combined.

While science, philosophy, poetry, and history combined were thus liberalising English thought through and through, prose fiction was contributing its share to the transformation of English social ideals. Dickens and Thackeray are the greatest novelists of the early Victorian period. Now it has been observed that Dickens "spent his early manhood among the politicians trained in Bentham's school," and that he "hardly ever wrote a novel without attacking an abuse"; while Thackeray's "opinions have a strong resemblance to those to which Rousseau gave popularity."[1] Indeed, Thackeray goes farther than Rousseau in pouring contempt on the rich and great, and in denouncing the adulation given to high rank by the English middle classes. Intensely modern and *bourgeois* in his view of life, and a warm admirer of American society, he has nothing but scornful mockery for the pietistic and patriarchal feudalism of Young

[1] Maine, *Popular Government*, pp. 153–54.

England. Then comes Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, with its glorification of passion as a leveller of social distinctions, followed by *Villette,* with its merciless picture of Jesuit morality put in action under the most favourable conditions. From a literary point of view, both works have set before all subsequent novelists the model of a style unequalled for its combination of splendour and strength.

This gospel of pure passionate love, as against conventionality, mammon-worship, selfish ambition, sybaritism, and profligacy, found another exponent in Emily Brontë, notwithstanding the haughty stoicism of her personal character. It is, as I have said, the very essence of Browning's philosophy, and was signally realised by his marriage with a great poetess. Before meeting him, Elizabeth Barrett had been led by a false religion to believe that her father's frightful selfishness was heaven's just judgment on her for giving to an earthly object affections that God alone could rightfully claim.[1] She learned to think very differently in Italy; and the last Book of *Aurora Leigh* gives an expression of supreme eloquence to what her husband had taught before in *Colombe's Birthday* and *The Flight of the Duchess*. Tennyson, too, whose own love-match had been delayed by poverty, strikes the same note in the Poems of his second period; and his *Princess,* on the surface a manifesto against the higher education of women, seems to have been inspired by a dread that it might interfere with the rights of passion, by separating them from their

[1] See the splendid poem entitled *Confessions.*

natural companions, whereas it has resulted in a closer intimacy between the sexes than before.

The glorification of human energy on the part of historians whose dissent from the dominant religion, although complete, remained unspoken, and of human love on the part of poets who gave Christianity an ostensible support, shows how far English idealism had become estranged from the pietism of twenty years before, and how utterly the Oxford Movement had failed to recapture it for ascetic superstition. At Oxford itself a counter-movement in the direction of free inquiry had sprung up even before Newman's secession to Rome in 1845; and the younger men, of whom some had been trained by Dr. Arnold, were rapidly assimilating the results of modern German thought. Strauss's *Life of Jesus,* published in 1835, soon became known in England. A brilliant and short-lived journalist, who was also at one time a clergyman, John Sterling, still remembered from his friendship with Carlyle, seems to have finally abandoned supernaturalism on reading it. Another young clergyman who had been a disciple of Newman's, the future historian, J. A. Froude, learned from Strauss to think of all religious traditions as myths. In 1849 he published a novel called *The Nemesis of Faith,* so outspoken that it led to the resignation of his fellowship at Exeter College. More than ten years earlier a little group of men and women at Coventry, belonging to the industrial classes and brought up in the narrowest pietism, had, without any help from Germany, come to reject the Gospels as miraculous narratives.

One of them, destined hereafter to achieve a world-wide fame under the name of George Eliot, undertook to translate Strauss, and produced a masterly version of his epoch-making work in 1846.

But the writer who made the deepest mark on the rationalistic side was F. W. Newman, a younger brother of the Tractarian leader. After taking the highest honours at Oxford he had gone out to Syria as a missionary. This calling entailed on the ardent zealot a close study of the New Testament. It led him first to doubt the legitimacy of the dogmas based on Scripture, then the trustworthiness of the Scriptural record itself, then the truth and even the excellence of Christianity as a religion. His *Phases of Faith* (1850) is a detailed and sincere account of the reasonings that led him step by step to this long unwelcome conclusion.

Some months after the appearance of *Phases of Faith* W. R. Greg, a Unitarian business man and journalist of high character and intellect, brought out a work of equally destructive and more systematic character called *The Creed of Christendom,* but really directed against the Bible's claim to supernatural authority. Although a remarkably luminous summary of the arguments on that side, it did not attain any wide popularity until nearly a quarter of a century later.

In those times it was considered a great victory for Freethought that the publication of such works as Newman's and Greg's did not entail unpleasant consequences on their authors. Ten years earlier, according to Sir Charles Lyell, they would have been sent to Coventry for it. Such, indeed, had

been the fate of Froude, who was cut by one friend after another in the streets of Oxford. So late as 1842 a few impulsive words uttered at a public meeting brought a worse penalty than social ostracism on the speaker. This was the celebrated G. J. Holyoake. Lecturing on Home Colonisation at Cheltenham the year before, he had been taxed by one of the audience with leaving God out of his scheme. Holyoake replied that he did not believe in God, and that he would put the Deity on half-pay, meaning that he would like to see half the property of the Church devoted to the relief of the poor. He was tried at Gloucester Assizes for blasphemy, and condemned to six months' imprisonment. After being liberated he found means to open a bookseller's shop in London, and became the founder of Secularism. This he has defined as the moral duty of man deduced from considerations pertaining to this life alone. In the neater phrase of a disciple, "Secularism purports to regulate human affairs by considerations purely human."[1] At its first promulgation Secularism was understood by friends and foes alike to exclude all theological belief, whether Christian or simply theistic. Secularists need not be atheists, but they could hardly be more than Agnostics. Since then a tendency has gained ground among professing Christians to identify the divine with what is most characteristically human—*i.e.*, with man's higher faculties; and a philosophical theologian has gone the length of proclaiming the service of humanity as the true and only service of God.[2] But when

[1] G. W. Foote, in *Religious Systems of the World*, p. 526 (1st ed).
[2] Edward Caird, *The Evolution of Religion*, vol. ii., p. 320.

Holyoake began his Secularist propaganda such an identification had not become popular, and for many years he carried on an active campaign against the current beliefs, culminating in his *Trial of Theism* (1858), one of the ablest books ever directed against the belief in a personal God.

As a disciple of Robert Owen, Holyoake interested himself warmly in the cause of industrial co-operation; but he understood better than Owen the importance of bringing this and all other movements for the elevation of the people into line with the democratic agitation. He also adopted more openly than Owen the Malthusian principle that the prosperity of the working classes can only be secured by restraining the increase of their numbers.

The same doctrine is advocated with something like enthusiasm in Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), long accepted as an authoritative manual of the subject. Mill agreed with Malthus in regarding over-population, while it lasted, as an impassable obstacle to Socialism; but he believed that legislation directed towards raising the standard of comfort and spreading knowledge among the working classes might induce them to set a voluntary limit on the number of their children. He also spoke hopefully of the co-operative movement, although he did not think that it would ever succeed, by means of peaceful competition, in beating capitalistic production out of the field. So far his anticipations have been justified. Co-operative societies for consumption have thriven and multiplied; co-operative societies for production have on the whole failed, and the most successful have departed from their original principle by becoming

mere joint-stock companies employing labourers paid by fixed wages. Hence in collectivist circles the voluntary Socialism of Owen and his followers has been succeeded by a revival of Chartist State Socialism, advocating the expropriation of land-owners, mine-owners, and capitalists by local municipalities or by the government of the whole country.

Chartism itself came to an end as an organised movement in 1848, the great year of abortive revolutions. Some of its leaders had seriously discredited their cause by acting against the Free Traders and breaking up Anti-Corn-Law meetings. Free Trade, however, had not wrought miracles. Vast quantities of capital had been sunk in railway speculation ; this, combined with the potato-famine, produced a commercial crisis, the effect of which was widespread distress among the people. Then Chartism lifted its head once more. A petition demanding the famous Six Points received an immense number of genuine and not a few spurious signatures. Preparations were made to carry it to the House of Commons, followed by half a million persons. Government forbade the procession ; Wellington took effectual means to resist its approach by armed force ; volunteer constables contributed overwhelming numbers to the defence of order. Finally, the petition was carried to the House in a cab, referred to a Special Committee, and shown to bear only a third of the signatures boasted of by the leader of the demonstration, Feargus O'Connor.

A group of liberal clergymen and laymen, with the Rev. F. D. Maurice at their head, profoundly

touched by the prevalent distress, proposed as a remedy to substitute theological for secularist principles in an attempted reorganisation of the most insufficiently remunerated industries, and started a new scheme of co-operation under the title of Christian Socialism. But religious inspiration failed to do the work expected of it, and, after a brief struggle for existence, this well-meant effort towards a practical evangelisation of the masses collapsed.

A writer of surpassing genius who, towards the close of the century, did more than any other single individual to revive the cause of Socialism, first made his mark during this period. Born in 1817, John Ruskin received first a clerical, then an artistic training. Opinions differ as to whether he might have become a great painter; he certainly became a great master of pictorial language. Although by nature and education an egoist, for many years he devoted all his powers to the interpretation of Turner's art, finding in it a deep philosophic meaning of which the great landscape painter had never dreamed. Turner was in fact a romanticist in form and colour, who habitually reconstructed the visible aspects of nature in such a way as to make them yield imaginative and emotional effects comparable to those produced by the most energetic discharges of passion, or by the most impressive groupings of ideal experiences in the works of his great poetic contemporaries. Ruskin professed to regard the painter's wonderful creations as primarily a new revelation of natural truth, and therefore he prepared himself for his work as an art-critic and

prophet of Turner by diligently collecting all the information contemporary science could furnish about the structure and history of the visible world as a subject for pictorial representation, much as a critic of figure-painting might qualify himself for the office by a course of human anatomy. Thus his earlier writings represent in a strange combination, and carried to a high degree of intensity, the romanticism and the scientific enthusiasm which divided between them the genius of the earlier nineteenth century. With them he associated, what Turner stood aloof from, a strong religious feeling of the Evangelical type, not native, but stamped on his mind by early training and never quite effaced. His aversion from the Oxford Movement was extreme ; but the pietism he shared with its leaders inspired him, as it inspired the neo-Catholics, with a passion for Gothic architecture, for the poetry of Dante, and for the earlier Italian religious painters. Italian influences soon dissipated the narrow Puritanism of his youth. Physical science, combined at a later period with the rationality of Greek literature and Greek art, whose spirit he came more and more to appreciate, did the rest. Before completing *Modern Painters,* Ruskin had parted with all religious belief. Floating fragments of his lost creed came back to him afterwards under the influence of spiritistic delusions ; but, as a teacher of the English people, he never again went outside the furtherance of earthly happiness by the rational application of natural means to the fulfilment of human needs.

Ruskin had faults and limitations on which at the present day it would be needless and ungracious

to dwell. What it behoves us to remember is that in him England produced and possessed the greatest master of æsthetic appreciation that the world has ever seen. No other critic has shown so profound, so comprehensive, so discriminating a sense of beauty in all its forms; no other has acquired so intimate a knowledge of nature and of art; no other has been able to communicate his knowledge and appreciation of beautiful things through a style of such consummate energy, exactness, and sweep, or so imposing in the magnificence of its decorative effect. What England at the present day would have been without him is too dismal for fancy to conjecture; too remote for imagination to realise what his transmitted influence will make of the England that is yet to be.

MODERN ENGLAND

A RECORD OF OPINION AND ACTION FROM THE TIME OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION TO THE PRESENT DAY

BY

ALFRED WILLIAM BENN

AUTHOR OF "THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH RATIONALISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY"

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Chapter X.

THE PUPILS OF CANNING

The fall of Sir Robert Peel's Ministry made little difference in the domestic policy of the English Government. The general principle of Free Trade received some further applications, and the freedom of the manufacturers to overwork their hands some further restrictions. Vindictive country gentlemen ceased to oppose Irish Coercion Bills that gave them no opportunity of shooting their lost leader from behind a hedge. What really made Russell's Administration differ from Peel's was the substitution of Lord Palmerston for Lord Aberdeen at the Foreign Office. The Minister who opened Mazzini's letters, and who is more than suspected of using the information thus obtained to warn Italy's oppressors of an approaching attempt to overthrow their power, was succeeded by the Minister whom Italian patriots regarded as their friend and champion. Aberdeen justified his conduct on the plea that an Italian revolution would have endangered the peace of Europe. In this nervous anxiety to preserve the *status quo* he differed widely from the imperious statesman whose policy had so nearly led to a European war seven years before. The change of Ministers initiated a series of events that subsequently transformed the face of Europe.

Bred in Canning's school, Palmerston, like

Canning, kept in view the double object of encouraging liberty and of promoting English interests abroad. Indeed, the two objects were closely connected, for a free people—especially one indebted for its freedom to England—would be less likely than an enslaved people to let itself be dragged into a war against her at the bidding of a great and ambitious military power. It might even on occasion become our ally. Besides, Palmerston, who had sat at the feet of Dugald Stewart, and whose recollections of the Terror were less vivid than those of the anti-Jacobin poet, probably loved liberty as such more genuinely than ever was possible to Canning.

Palmerston's high-handed Eastern policy had achieved in 1840 a complete diplomatic victory over France. Henceforth the French King and his Minister Guizot were systematically identified by the French Opposition writers and speakers with the principle of peace at any price. This reproach ultimately proved their ruin. To soothe French vanity they brought back Napoleon's body from St. Helena, and buried it with great pomp under the dome of the Invalides. But this vain pageant merely went to heighten the painful contrast between the glories of the Empire and the sordid bourgeois government of Louis Philippe. Then advantage was taken of the troubles in Spain to re-establish French ascendancy over the sister Bourbon kingdom. An intrigue was set on foot, and carried to an apparently successful issue, whose object was to secure the Spanish throne for an eventual descendant of Louis Philippe. One of his sons, the Duc de Montpensier, was married to

the sister and heir presumptive of the young Queen Isabella, while the Queen herself was married to her cousin, Don Francisco, by whom it was known that she could not have children. This arrangement was effected in direct violation of a previous agreement with England that Montpensier should not marry the Infanta until the Queen was married and had heirs. Possibly Guizot might have kept his word had Lord Aberdeen remained in office. His excuse is the alleged determination of Palmerston to marry Isabella to a Coburg Prince. Nothing can palliate the infamy of imposing such a husband as Don Francisco on the young Queen; but, justifiable or not, the Spanish marriages put an end to the *entente cordiale* established by Aberdeen, thus placing a powerful weapon in the hands of the French Opposition, who reproached Guizot and his master with sacrificing the friendship of England to the interests of the Orleans family.

In another way the unfortunate Louis Philippe's desire for peace hurried on his fall. At that time only 200,000 Frenchmen possessed the electoral franchise. As a consequence of this restriction, government was carried on by a system of gross corruption, frequently giving rise to open scandals. Extension of the suffrage became a watchword with the Liberal Opposition. A very moderate concession, amounting to the admission of 200,000 new electors, would have satisfied their demands. But so convinced were the King and Guizot of the popular craving for war that they refused to strengthen the representation of public opinion in the Chamber even to that trifling extent. In February, 1848, a Reform banquet was forbidden.

The people of Paris rose in arms; the National Guard showed signs of defection; Guizot resigned; the King fled, and a Republic was proclaimed.

France has been credited with the whole European Revolution of 1848, and no doubt her example greatly stimulated the movement; but in fact it had begun more than a month before, at Palermo, and had spread over the whole of Italy while Paris still lay quiescent. Pius IX., elected Pope in June, 1846, had given the first signal for reform, his accession exactly coinciding with the return of the English Liberals to office. Opposed by Austria, he expresses a wish to the English Government "to have the assistance of some person of rank and experience who might aid him by advice, and at the same time afford him the moral support of England."[1] A Whig nobleman, Lord Minto, is sent out for the purpose, with directions to visit Turin and Florence on the way, with a view to strengthening "the authority of the constitutional Governments in Italy."[2] Palmerston's instructions to this travelling agent express a strong disapproval of Austria's threatened interference with the new reforming movement. At the same time Palmerston was holding back France and Austria from forcibly interfering to help the Catholic and Jesuit-ruled cantons of Switzerland against the Federal Government. That his help, there or elsewhere, would have gone beyond words is unlikely, and he always counselled moderation to the revolutionary leaders

[1] Evelyn Ashley, *Life of Lord Palmerston,* vol. i., p. 33.
[2] *Ibid,* p. 34.

as well as to the kings. But with the credulous and excitable peoples of Southern Europe words told like gun-shots; and England probably repaid to Europe in 1848 more than her own Reform agitation owed to France in 1830.

From the beginning French democracy had been doubly compromised, by the support of the Socialists and by the support of the priests. A movement like Robert Owen's for putting co-operators in the place of capitalists had become confounded with a movement like that of the Chartists for confiscating the property of the rich. A terror more deadly than that once inspired by the guillotine took hold of the *bourgeoisie* and the peasants, and drove them to seek protection from the army and the Church. It soon became evident that political liberty could not yet co-exist with universal suffrage in France. Practically the only question was whether absolute power should be exercised by the heir of Charles X. or by the heir of Napoleon. A popular vote decided in favour of the Bonapartist candidate, Prince Louis Napoleon, who was elected President of the Republic. He had secured the support of the priests by promising to reinstate Pope Pius IX. in the temporal sovereignty of Rome, whence he had been driven, on failing as a reformer, by the Italian revolutionists. After a waiting game of three years the Prince-President used the army to destroy what little remained of French liberty. A so-called plebiscite condoned the treacherous and sanguinary means by which he had seized on despotic power, and in another year another

plebiscite made him Emperor under the title of Napoleon III.

Writing under Louis Philippe, an observer who studied and knew French society as no one else has ever known it, the great novelist Balzac, declared that absolutism would be the only cure for the prevalent corruption; and the greatest of French philosophers, Auguste Comte, hailed Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* as a necessary and wholesome measure. Nevertheless, the author of that deed remains the most sinister figure in modern history. Most persons who retain any belief in public morality will agree with John Austin that "the man was a scoundrel," and will sympathise with Mr. Swinburne's wish to see him "kick heels with his throat in a rope." That his success saved France from civil war or from a Bourbon restoration can make no difference in our judgment on the atrocity of his crimes until it has been shown that no other means were available for that end.

Palmerston's foreign policy had been a necessary antecedent in the chain of events that led up to the Second Empire; and the *coup d'état* in its turn determined the rest of his career. Long used to the exercise of despotic authority in his own department, the Foreign Secretary roused the displeasure of Cabinet and Court by taking important decisions without reference to the wishes either of his colleagues or of the Queen and her Consort. Disbelieving in a French Republic, hating the Bourbons, and rejoicing in whatever insured their exclusion from the throne of France, he heard with satisfaction of what had been done on December

2, 1851, and frankly expressed his opinion in private conversation with the French Ambassador in London. Russell, who was Prime Minister, had gone as far; but advantage was taken of the Foreign Secretary's more responsible position to make the alleged indiscretion a pretext for driving him from office.

In a few weeks he had his revenge, and the same event gave occasion for it that had caused his fall. Many people in England feared that the new Napoleon would signalise his advent by waging a war of reprisals on his uncle's most inveterate enemy. It was thought that steam had bridged the Channel, and that an invading army might be expected to land any day without a previous declaration of hostilities. No armed force existed fit to cope with such an assailant, and a cry arose for providing some means of defence. For this purpose Russell proposed to reconstitute what was called the local militia. Palmerston moved an amendment to omit the word "local," "so as to constitute a regular militia which should be transportable all over the kingdom, and so be ready for any emergency,"[1] and carried it by eleven votes. Russell resigned, and was succeeded by a Protectionist Government, with Lord Derby at its head and Disraeli as his lieutenant in the Commons. Disraeli soon exhibited his unscrupulous versatility by declaring for Free Trade; but this apostasy did not save his party from defeat at the General Election of 1852, which resulted in the return of a slightly diminished Liberal majority. Defeated on

[1] Ashley, *Life of Palmerston,* vol. i., p. 333.

their Budget, the Conservatives resigned, and were succeeded by a Coalition Ministry composed of Whigs and Conservative Free Traders, or Peelites, as they were then called, under Lord Aberdeen as Prime Minister, Gladstone for the first time holding high office as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Palmerston went to the Home Office, where it was thought he would do no harm. This peculiar arrangement, as by the fatality of a Greek drama, brought on the Crimean War.

No mistake could have been greater than to suppose that the new French Emperor would attempt either to avenge or to emulate his uncle. Napoleon III. shaped his course on the simple principle of continuing the policy of his predecessor where it had been fortunate, and reversing it where it had been unlucky. France had entered on a wonderful career of material progress under Louis Philippe, and so everything was done to further her prosperity under the new Empire. Free speech had bred revolution; it ceased to exist. The priests had been alienated; education now passed for all practical purposes under their exclusive control. Above all, France had found herself isolated in Europe, and had got the reputation of being afraid to fight. She must therefore reassert her claims to respect, if possible in alliance with other Powers, but especially in alliance with England, resuming the *entente cordiale* which had benefited Louis Philippe so much, and avoiding a provocation like the Spanish marriages, which had cost him so dear.

An opportunity for carrying this policy into

effect presented itself before long. Simultaneously with the re-establishment of the Empire, on the strength of an obsolete treaty, and under strong pressure from the French Government, certain privileges connected with the Holy Places in Palestine were transferred by the Sultan from the Greek to the Latin priests. The Czar Nicholas took this for what it was probably intended to be—a personal provocation. He immediately advanced troops towards the Turkish frontier, and demanded in terms of studied insolence a Protectorate over all the Greek subjects of the Porte. Till then England had remained unconcerned in the quarrel. She now intervened, and henceforth took a foremost place in resisting claims which, had they been allowed, would have made the Sultan a vassal of the Czar. Our Government had the more reason to suspect such a design, as it had already received overtures from Nicholas amounting to a proposal for the partition of the Turkish Empire.

Our former Ambassador at Constantinople, Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, himself a Canning, trained in the same school as Palmerston and long his close political ally, was sent on a special mission to cope with the new situation. He encouraged the Sultan to resist Russia's claims, and greatly simplified matters by arranging an amicable settlement of the dispute about the Holy Places. Mentschikoff, the Czar's envoy, then repeated his master's demand for a Protectorate in a modified form. By Stratford's advice it was rejected, whereupon Nicholas gave orders for the occupation of the Danubian Principalities by a Russian Army. The great Powers then intervened, and nearly succeeded

in forcing Turkey to accept an arrangement which, in substance, if not in form, would have amounted to the concession of a Russian Protectorate over her Greek Christian subjects. At a hint, as is supposed, from Lord Stratford, the Sultan's Ministers declined to go beyond a promise to confirm existing treaties, and, on the Czar's refusal to evacuate the Principalities, declared war.

Napoleon III. has been accused of breaking up the European Concert, engaging France and England in a separate alliance, and acting on a deliberate system of provocation which ultimately made it impossible for Nicholas to accept a peaceful solution of the Eastern Question. But this seems to be a mistake. For that very arrangement known to history as the Vienna Note, propounded by the Powers, accepted by Russia, and rejected by Turkey, was, in fact, drawn up by Napoleon himself,[1] while the sole power that backed up Turkey in rejecting it was England—that is, the war-party in the English Cabinet, led by Russell and Palmerston, who eventually brought over the pacific Premier, Aberdeen, to their views.

Russell counted only in the Cabinet and the House of Commons. Palmerston represented the public opinion of the country. England had not forgotten the events of 1849, when the European revolution, with which she warmly sympathised as an attempt to copy her own institutions, had been so mercilessly suppressed. Now, while it was Austria that held in bondage the two nationalities towards which English sympathies were most

[1] P. de la Gorce, *Histoire du Second Empire,* vol. i., p. 187.

attracted, Italy and Hungary, it was Russia that, by intervening against the victorious Hungarian armies just when they had won national independence, re-cemented the whole fabric of Hapsburg tyranny tottering to its fall. So violent was the indignation excited that J. S. Mill, writing ten years afterwards, declared that for England to have helped Hungary would have been "an honourable and virtuous act," and for England and France acting together even a politic act, as it would have saved them from fighting Russia in less advantageous circumstances subsequently.[1]

Nor was this all. After their final defeat some thousands of proscribed Hungarian patriots had taken refuge in Turkish territory. Austria and Russia simultaneously demanded their surrender. By Stratford Canning's advice the Porte refused, and Palmerston sent a fleet up to the Dardanelles to support it. Thus the Turks came to be regarded, not only as brave men fighting for their own independence, but as champions of European freedom.

Again, a certain philosophy of history current at that time, and by no means yet extinct, taught that the world, to its great detriment, tends periodically to fall under the sway of a universal monarchy, the Babylonian Empire being the first recorded instance and the Roman Empire the last. Since then several attempts have been made to revive the system of universal domination—by the mediæval Popes, by Philip II., by Louis XIV., and by Napoleon; but all were baffled, as the English people believed,

[1] Mill, *Dissertations and Discussions,* vol. iii., p. 177.

almost entirely by English vigilance and courage. For many years past an apprehension had been gaining ground that Russia was preparing to play the old game over again—had, indeed, been playing it with such success that her work might be considered as half done. Sweden, Poland, Turkey were partially devoured, Austria and Prussia reduced to vassalage, India and China threatened, the United States made a fawning sycophant. Ought not England once more to fulfil her historic mission and strike down the Colossus with the feet of clay?

According to another philosophy of history, the civilised nations were periodically overwhelmed, and always threatened, by inundations of northern barbarism. Rome had succumbed to the Goths and Vandals, China to the Tartars; mediæval Christendom narrowly escaped being crushed by Genghis Khan. Popular ethnology classed the Russians as Mongols, descended in some way from the hordes of Attila, and destined to spread the same devastation over Europe unless prompt and energetic means were taken to restrain their encroachments. Some fatalists thought resistance useless; but the majority were not of that opinion.

Lord Palmerston was not a philosophic historian, but he had been bred up to believe in the Balance of Power; he thought that Russia, in possession of Constantinople, would be a danger at once to the future liberties of Europe, to British trade in the Levant, and, more remotely, to British empire in India. Probably he calculated that, having to fight her sooner or later, it would be safer to fight now, with France as our ally and the German

Powers neutral, than at some future time in less favourable circumstances.

It seems, therefore, that now as afterwards in three great crises of European policy Napoleon III. found himself duped by a more astute politician than himself; that Palmerston manœuvred him into the Russian war of 1854, as Cavour was to manœuvre him into the ultimately ruinous Italian war of 1859, and Bismarck into the fatal neutrality of 1866 and into the annihilating ambush of 1870. In return for being made the tool of England's policy he got the recognition of Queen Victoria for himself and for the fair adventuress who shared his throne, as her equals and her friends.

Had Palmerston been Prime Minister, or even Foreign Minister, his warlike attitude, supported as it was by the French Government, might have averted war. But the known peace principles of Lord Aberdeen and of his chief lieutenant, Gladstone, effectually screened the guiding hand of the Home Secretary. Similarly, the passionate desire of the English people to strike down the destroyer of European liberty was screened behind their more ostentatious exultation in the triumph of peace and industry recently signalised by the Great Exhibition of 1851, the more so because the Free Trade leaders, Cobden and Bright, now eloquently advocated the cause of non-interference.

Turkey's declaration of war was followed by an advance of the English and French fleets to Constantinople, ordered at the suggestion of Napoleon III., with Palmerston's full approval. Russia, in perfect conformity with her rights as

a belligerent, replied by destroying the Turkish squadron at Sinope. Then, again under pressure from the French Emperor, the allied fleets received orders to advance into the Black Sea, and to drive all Russian ships back into port. This step involved a breach of international treaties; it amounted to a beginning of hostilities, and did actually bring on war. It had been approved of during the temporary retirement of Palmerston, who, for reasons not yet explained, had left the Ministry. But his absence told for more than his presence, if we are to believe what Kinglake supposes, that "the very apprehension of having him for an adversary weighed heavily on the decision of his late colleagues."[1] In a few days he had returned to office, stronger than before.

By their aggressive action in the Black Sea England and France separated themselves from the German Powers, and so exasperated the Czar that he disregarded their summons to evacuate the Danubian Principalities, and war ensued. It need not have lasted long, for, under pressure from Austria, the Russian troops soon afterwards recrossed the Pruth, their place being taken by an Austrian army of occupation. This, however, did not satisfy the allied Western Powers. Unwilling to bring back their fleets and armies without striking a great blow, and believing the present to be a unique opportunity for crippling their enemy, they resolved to invade the Crimea, to sink the Russian fleet, and to destroy the great fortress of Sebastopol, by which Constantinople was permanently

[1] *Invasion of the Crimea,* vol. ii., p. 27.

threatened. It is said that the idea of a Crimean expedition first originated with Napoleon III., but only acquired fixity when taken hold of by Palmerston's more energetic will.

Under more efficient leadership, the purpose of the Allies would have been accomplished a few weeks after their united forces were disembarked in the neighbourhood of the great Russian fortress. As it was, they succeeded; and, although untoward circumstances postponed the fall of Sebastopol for nearly a year, politically the delay proved no misfortune, for that long struggle ended with the complete exhaustion of Russia, the loss of her military prestige, and her exclusion from all share in the rearrangement of the Western world. Palmerston's dream of a regenerated Turkey—not shared by the better-informed Stratford de Redcliffe—led, indeed, only to more misgovernment, waste, and misery; but the embryo nationalities of the Balkan Peninsula have gained in the long run by an intervention which has ultimately secured them a larger autonomy than would have been compatible with their incorporation in the empire of the Czar.

Such were some of the ulterior effects of the Crimean War. Its immediate effect on home politics was to lay bare the gross inefficiency of our aristocratically organised administration. Military maladministration was no new thing; it had raged through the French War. The new thing was its speedy exposure, due in this instance to the *Times* correspondent in the Crimea, the late Sir William Russell. Popular indignation turned itself, in the first instance, not against the faulty system, but against the Government of Lord Aberdeen, which

resigned after a vote of censure in the House of Commons. Palmerston, the national choice, succeeded Aberdeen as Premier; and, after a little delay, the whole Peelite section of the Cabinet followed its chief, leaving the more warlike Whigs in sole possession of power.

Among the seceders was W. E. Gladstone, already at that time, "without dispute and beyond rivalry, the first man in the House of Commons."[1] Some months later he advocated granting peace to Russia on terms less onerous than those accepted by her after the fall of Sebastopol. It so happened that a few years before these events, in the course of an Italian journey, Gladstone's attention had been drawn to the frightful way in which the Neapolitan Liberals were treated by their Sovereign, King Ferdinand, 20,000 of them being kept in dungeons as political prisoners. Among others, Carlo Poerio, who had been Minister of Public Instruction under the Liberal Government of 1848, was found "chained to a murderer, and suffering terrible privations."[2] Gladstone exposed this state of things to all Europe in a pamphlet which, though it did not procure the liberation of the sufferers—they were only released in April, 1859—ultimately contributed to the independence and unification of Italy. But apparently he did not grasp the solidarity of interests linking Bourbon tyranny with Russian power. Yet the connection seemed obvious enough, and was pressed on his

[1] *The National Review*, vol i., p. 423 (1855).

[2] Herbert Paul, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Supplement, vol. ii., p. 285. Mr. Paul erroneously gives the date of Poerio's release as 1852.

notice by a candid friend in a new organ of public opinion just then beginning to appear.[1]

Already, indeed, the greatest of Italian statesmen had caught this connection, and had begun to utilise the war against Russia for the benefit of Italian independence. In April, 1855, Count Cavour sent 15,000 Piedmontese troops to the assistance of the Allies in the Crimea, placing them under the orders of the English general. They took part in the last battle fought before Sebastopol fell; and, although on that occasion the French did nearly everything, the Italians were allowed to claim far more than their proportionate share of the honours of victory. A Catholic orator, Montalembert, denounced in the French *Corps Legislatif* the danger to European Conservatism of this alliance with Austria's revolutionary enemy, but his warnings passed unheeded.[2] In the Congress held at Paris in 1856 to arrange a Treaty of Peace, Cavour sat officially as the representative of Sardinia, virtually as the representative of all Italy. He took advantage of his position to bring Italy's wrongs before Europe; Count Walewski and Lord Clarendon, the French and English Plenipotentiaries, supported his attack on Austria; and, although nothing came of it at the moment, a deep impression remained that something must be done for Italy, and that the Powers which had overthrown Russia were her friends.

While in Europe England had shone for fifty

[1] *National Review, ut supra,* pp. 427–28. The article is evidently by R. H. Hutton.

[2] De la Gorce, *Histoire du Second Empire,* vol. i., p. 376.

years as the champion of right and liberty against oppression, England as an Asiatic Power continued to appear in a somewhat less favourable light. At the close of the Crimean War we find her attacking Persia, in pursuance of a quarrel for which her own Minister at Tehran was chiefly responsible. Before the conclusion of this discreditable affair our agents at Hong Kong committed a much worse outrage on Chinese rights. A certain vessel called the *Arrow,* belonging to a Chinese merchant and manned by Chinese sailors, had, with doubtful propriety, been authorised to fly the British flag. This privilege, whatever its justification, had been merely temporary; and ten days after its expiry Chinese officials boarded the *Arrow* and took away her crew, on the plea that some of them had been guilty of piracy. Sir John Bowring, the Governor of Hong Kong, demanded their surrender, and, on its being refused, the forts guarding the approaches to Canton were attacked and taken. Yeh, the Chinese Commissioner, then restored the crew, but demanded that those accused of piracy should be given up to Chinese justice, besides refusing to apologise for his proceedings. Then came fresh claims and further hostilities, Bowring's whole attitude being apparently modelled on the behaviour of Russia to Turkey, which had recently excited so much indignation in English breasts.

It excited some indignation even when the bully happened to be an Englishman. Palmerston, who made a rule of backing up his agents whether right or wrong, defended Bowring ; but a vote of censure moved by Cobden and supported by Russell, Gladstone, Disraeli, and the whole Conservative

party, passed the House of Commons by sixteen votes, Charles Greville, a rather cynical man of the world, "rejoicing, for the honour of the country, that it had condemned this iniquitous case."[1] The country, however, held a different view of its honour, and, on an appeal to its judgment, gave a triumphant majority to the policy of the popular Minister; the leading advocates of peace, Cobden, Bright, W. J. Fox, and Milner Gibson, who had also headed the Anti-Corn-Law movement, all losing their seats. In the war subsequently carried on with varying fortune, until the final submission of the Chinese in 1860 to the united forces of England and France, we had just complaints to make of their cruel and treacherous conduct. By way, it is to be supposed, of civilising them, the treaty of peace provided that the opium traffic should thenceforth be legalised, and that the duty on it should be fixed at ten instead of twenty per cent., the rate which the Chinese Government vainly entreated us to permit.

Our differences with China would have been settled sooner but for the diversion of the forces first intended for service in that quarter to meet the more pressing necessities of India. So denuded indeed was India of European soldiers, owing to the requirements of the Crimea, that, but for their timely help, a formidable mutiny, which had broken out in the East India Company's Native Bengal army, might have necessitated the entire reconquest of the Peninsula. Discontent had for some time been growing. A policy of territorial aggrandisement, pursued by a series of Governors-General,

[1] *The Greville Memoirs,* Part III., vol. ii., p. 95.

culminated in Lord Dalhousie's annexation of Oudh, against treaty obligations, and on grounds that would equally have justified the Czar in seizing on Constantinople. And the extension of our sway had become associated with the suspicion of designs against the religion of the people. It had been part of the policy pursued by the East India Company in the eighteenth century strictly to forbid any approach to Christian proselytism among the Hindoos. But the Evangelical movement, manifested among other forms by a vast increase of missionary activity, had led first to the establishment of an ecclesiastical organisation to meet the spiritual needs of the civil and military establishment, and then to direct efforts, in which even some officers took part, to spread Christianity among the natives.

Matters came to a crisis when, by an act of stupid official negligence, cartridges were served out to the Sepoys, greased with a mixture of cow's and swine's fat. Before using the cartridges, their ends had to be bitten off. Now, for a Hindoo to put either cow's or swine's fat into his mouth involved loss of caste in the present life, and eternal damnation in the life to come; while defilement with pig's fat alone would render a Mohammedan liable to no less serious penalties. A rumour spread and obtained universal credence that the greased cartridges were designed for the express purpose of destroying the soldiers' caste, and compelling them to embrace Christianity. It would have been difficult to disabuse the Sepoys of this belief without having recourse to arguments which might have been turned with fatal

effect against the doctrine of Original Sin as then held by nearly every adherent of the creed it was thought so desirable for them to embrace.

After simmering for five months, discontent turned to mutiny and massacre in May, 1857. Oudh, so unjustly seized, proved the focus of disturbance and disaster. John Lawrence saved the Punjaub, and native troops from the Punjaub saved India. Colin Campbell, arriving with reinforcements from England, completed the work of restoring order, and in a year from its beginning the Mutiny was over. Lord Canning, the Governor-General, a son of the great Minister, showed, perhaps, less promptness of decision than the situation demanded; but his courage was unshaken, his confidence wisely bestowed, and his mercifulness, amid a storm of vindictive passion, inflexibly maintained.

Throughout the whole of this tragic episode one is struck by the great superiority in ability and efficiency of the Indian over the English administration, due, no doubt, to its being less hampered by the survival of mediæval institutions. It is worth noting that not one of the three great men just mentioned belonged by birth to the aristocratic caste. Lawrence's father was colonel in a marching regiment; Colin Campbell's father was a Scotch carpenter; while the statesman from whose widow Canning inherited his peerage had been stigmatised as an adventurer by high-born Whigs and Tories alike. Finally, he whom public opinion singled out as the fighting hero of the whole war, Havelock, was the son of a Sunderland shipbuilder. People observed with a mixture of amusement and

indignation that the same *Gazette* where Havelock's promotion to the rank of K.C.B. appeared announced the bestowal of the same honour on a certain courtier named Phipps, a relation of Lord Normanby, popularly supposed to have earned it by his zeal in supplying the Queen with entertaining gossip from the newspapers.

In view of such facts, it might seem no gain, at least for India, that the Mutiny led to a transfer of authority from the East India Company to the Crown. But while the conduct of Indian affairs on relatively rational principles does not seem to have suffered, but the contrary, from a revolution less momentous in reality than in appearance, the State as a whole has gained. As a consequence of the Mutiny, the contingent of European troops in the Indian Army has been considerably augmented, thus affording enlarged opportunities of military training and experience to English officers. And, what is equally important for East and West, the transference of India to the Crown, or, in other words, to the complete control of our elected Parliamentary Government, has carried with it the transference of appointments in the Indian Civil Service from interest to ability. It had been a part of Macaulay's reconstitution of the Indian Government that its Civil Service should be opened to the public by means of competitive examinations. But this provision had been allowed to remain dormant, and, although re-enacted in 1853, was now for the first time, at J. S. Mill's recommendation, fully enforced.[1] Under the stress of Indian example,

[1] Molesworth, *History of England,* vol. iii., p. 142.

the same principle soon extended itself to the English Civil Service, to the scientific army services, and finally to the whole army.

Whatever importance may belong to the reaction of Asiatic interests on the policy and public opinion of England, the influence exercised by Continental affairs counted for much more. We have seen how the Crimean War arose as an indirect consequence from English sympathy with the unsuccessful revolutions of 1848, and from the change of dynasty brought about in France by the events of that year. Italian liberty, made possible once more by the ruin of Russia's European domination, now took the place of the Eastern Question as the centre of European interest and the determining antecedent of all further political progress.

Italy numbered more sympathisers in England than anywhere else. Many English travellers had carried home happy memories of her cities, mountains, and seashores; others had made her a second home, and had intermarried with her people. Italian refugees found England their safest European asylum; it was not forgotten that Bentinck had given Sicily a free constitution in 1812; quite recently Palmerston had sided with the national movement of 1848. Both countries had even a common enemy in the Papacy, although the causes of their hostility differed widely enough. A year after his restoration to the temporal sovereignty of Rome by French bayonets, Pius IX. had thought fit to divide England and Wales into twelve Bishoprics, with the celebrated Dr. Wiseman (the original of Browning's Bishop Blougram), as

Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, at their head. There were at that time considerably under a million Roman Catholics in England, mostly Irish or of Irish parentage, and the new episcopate seemed rather in excess of their spiritual requirements. But the secessions from Protestantism to Rome that followed the decline of the Tractarian movement, although a vanishing quantity as compared with the total population, seemed numerous enough to justify the credulous ecclesiastical imagination in hoping for conversions on a larger scale in the near future. Anyhow, the Papal Brief creating the new episcopal organisation described it as a measure for "re-establishing and extending the Catholic faith in England."[1] Even so, however, English Protestants, with their innumerable missions for converting the world in general and Roman Catholics in particular to what they called the pure Gospel, should have been the very last religious body to complain of similar proceedings when adopted, without the slightest attempt at concealment or constraint, to win them over to what a majority of Christians considered the only true faith. And if, as they alleged, their own religion rested on reason, it had nothing to fear from the unaided show of authority among such a reasonable people as the English were supposed to be. But in fact the current Biblicism had no such basis; it rested, like the rival creed, merely on authority and prescription; it had been established by force at the Reformation, and it quivered to the centre when challenged by a more imperious

[1] Walpole, *History of England,* vol. v., p. 421.

voice than any that its accredited representatives could raise in reply.

Probably the Whigs, who then ruled England, if they had fallen back from the complete religious unbelief of Holland House, looked in their hearts on all additions to pure Deism as so much superstition. Publicly they went some length in the Liberal direction. We have seen how Lord John Russell made Hampden a Bishop in spite of a protest signed by half the episcopate. Palmerston, as Home Secretary, at a time when cholera was raging, replied to an application from the Edinburgh Presbytery for the appointment of a national fast by suggesting that appropriate measures of sanitation would furnish a more efficacious check to the ravages of the disease; and he subsequently gave great scandal to the whole Evangelical party by informing a labourers' meeting that "all children were born good."[1]

Party leaders so scornful of superstition in general were particularly impatient of superstition when it appeared under an anti-national form. Lord John took the opportunity of combining the Pope and the Puseyite clergy in a common denunciation addressed to the Bishop of Durham. Amid much confusion he brought in a Bill forbidding the assumption of territorial titles by the Pope's new Bishops, and annulling all gifts or bequests made to them under such titles. The second provision, which alone mattered, had to be withdrawn. The first provision became law, but was never obeyed, and has since been repealed. Ministers and people

[1] Ashley, *Life of Palmerston,* vol. ii., p. 15.

covered themselves with ridicule, while Cardinal Wiseman kept up his dignity throughout. But a feeling of soreness remained, and England became more the friend of Italy than ever from having been involved in a discreditable conflict with their common enemy, the Pope.

Cavour would have preferred an English to a French alliance, but in the circumstances it was totally impossible; Austria could more easily have supported the Sepoy Mutiny than we could have sent an army to Lombardy. Napoleon III. hesitated long, and might never have made up his mind had it not been made up for him by Italian assassins. As the imperial pair were driving to the Paris Opera on the evening of January 14, 1858, bombs thrown by Orsini, a Roman exile, and some accomplices exploded under their carriage, killing and wounding 156 persons. Neither the Emperor nor the Empress was hurt; but the purpose of the attack was better secured by their escape than by their death. Orsini, while awaiting his doom, wrote to Louis Napoleon, whose companion in arms he had once been, entreating him to free Italy; and an appeal backed by such terrible arguments did not pass unheeded.

Orsini's attempt had been prepared and his bombs manufactured in London. The French Government asked for new legislation imposing severer penalties on the plotting of such outrages for the future. This seemed a reasonable request, and Palmerston proposed to meet it by a Bill making conspiracy to commit murder either within or without the United Kingdom punishable by

imprisonment for life.[1] Unfortunately for him, some hot-headed French colonels had used language suggesting recourse to armed invasion if their master's enemies continued to find shelter and impunity within our shores, and their angry addresses had received a sort of official sanction by being printed in the *Moniteur*. Lord John Russell and the Radicals opposed the second reading of the Conspiracy Bill on the ground that the laws of England should not be changed at the dictation of a foreign despot. It is said that Lord Derby, watching the debate from the gallery of the House of Commons, saw the unique opportunity of putting his rival in a minority, and sent down orders to the Conservatives to join the Liberal malcontents in defeating a measure of which both he and they entirely approved. The country gentlemen of England did as they were commanded; the Bill was lost by a majority of nineteen; Palmerston resigned, and Derby took his place. A trick that would have ruined any man's reputation on the racecourse put him and his party in office; but their tenure of it was insecure from the beginning, nor did it long continue.

As has been already observed, Orsini's bombs did their work more effectually by failure than they could have done it by success. In fear of a fresh attempt on his life, Napoleon III. arranged a secret meeting with Cavour at Plombières, where a plan for the expulsion of Austria from Italy by the united forces of France and Piedmont was concerted. Lombardy, Venice, and some other

[1] Walpole, *History of Twenty-five Years*, vol. i., p. 118.

territories were to be united with the Sardinian dominions into a North Italian kingdom, while Savoy and perhaps Nice were to be ceded to France. In pursuance of this programme Austria was goaded into declaring war in the following April, and almost on the same day the English Parliament was dissolved, a decisive opportunity being thus afforded to our people for showing on which side their sympathies lay; for, although the appeal was made on a question of purely domestic policy, it was practically decided by reference to the great crisis in foreign affairs.

Ten years of Chartist agitation had left behind an impression that the people were imperfectly represented. There were fewer working-men's constituencies than under the unreformed Parliament; and the supremacy of the middle classes remained much less complete than had been intended and expected in 1832. It seemed unjust that so many Englishmen should be excluded from the suffrage; nor was that the only evil complained of. Had the million voters been distributed among constituencies of approximately equal numerical strength, their representatives might have given a fairly adequate expression to the public opinion of the country. But so far was this just arrangement from being realised that a fifth of the electorate actually returned a majority of the House, the difference of voting values being sometimes as thirty to one, according to the population of the boroughs in which they were cast.

Nor was the variation a mere arithmetical curiosity of no political significance. Voters in

small constituencies were much more amenable to the influences of rank and wealth than voters in large ones; they could be more easily bribed or bullied into returning a plutocrat or a territorial magnate; while again the persons who so obtained seats in the Legislature used their power to thwart all attempts at an equitable readjustment of taxation, and to support an administrative system which threw the public service into the hands of the titled class or of their nominees.

Another evil, less noticed at the time, was the loss of legislative power caused by the tendency of parties towards a Parliamentary equilibrium. We saw how a somewhat similar state of things had become permanent in the unreformed Parliament, and how it made for utter legislative stagnation, as no Government could afford to alienate groups of members interested in the support of any particular abuse. Since the fall of Sir Robert Peel there had been, in name at least, a permanent Liberal majority, but it consisted of four different sections —Whig, Radical, Peelite, and Irish Catholic— between which it was Disraeli's policy to be always driving wedges, without any particular scruple as to the measures he advocated, opposed, or surrendered; while the art of the Liberal leaders lay in keeping them together by judicious management, in winning Opposition support by concessions to Conservative prejudices, or in bringing outside opinion to bear on the whole House by an ostentatiously national policy.

Finally, the settlement of 1832, while it made the ruling Chamber an organ of middle-class opinion, by the very act of conferring sovereignty on the

middle class, made the administrative power an almost exclusively aristocratic privilege. In advocating a wide democratic suffrage, James Mill had foretold that the poorer classes would bestow their confidence on the middle class, whom they had always taken for models and advisers; he may not have observed that the middle class in turn was similarly disposed to imitate and confide in the aristocracy. Anyhow, such had proved to be the law of English society; and the preference given to titled persons for posts in the administration manifested itself more especially under Whig Governments, so that Whig and oligarch became almost convertible terms; at any rate, both Tories and Radicals combined to foster that belief. In practice, however, the difference between Whigs and Tories merely amounted to this, that statesmen sprung from the middle class, like Canning, Huskisson, Peel, Gladstone, and Disraeli, found a more open field for their talents in a party which, as J. S. Mill observed, was by the law of its existence the stupidest—and he might have added the laziest—than among that which included the ablest, the most energetic, and the most ambitious of those born to hereditary wealth.

The first Reform agitation had been headed by Whig nobles; the Free Trade agitation had brought to the front gifted middle-class leaders who had learned to look on the territorial aristocracy, whether Whig or Tory, as monopolists who deliberately starved the people and obstructed the development of manufacturing industry for the express and avowed purpose of keeping wealth and power in their own exclusive possession. Regarding

them thus as natural enemies, their hostility did not cease with the abolition of the Corn Laws, but led to an exposure of the abuses which, as was alleged, were inseparable from a titled administration, and would be remedied by thorough-going democracy. What the new Radicals wanted was less to give the people power than to take power away from the oligarchy of inherited wealth, and to transfer it to an aristocracy of industrial ability, hating war as a source of expenditure and an interruption to trade, besides being directly productive of pain, disease, and death. And they thought that by giving votes to the working classes, together with the ballot and a sweeping redistribution of seats, this object would be secured.

Lord John Russell was the first statesman to take up Parliamentary Reform after the collapse of Chartism in 1848. In 1852, and again in 1854, he introduced Bills of which the second, at least, would have enfranchised a large section of the working-classes and considerably diminished the number of small boroughs. His object was probably rather to increase the Parliamentary strength of moderate Liberalism than to gain power for passing Radical measures. On neither occasion did he receive any support either within or without the House. But the value of Reform as a card in the game of party politics came before long to be recognised, and it was periodically played for many years between the Ins and the Outs, with hardly less unscrupulousness on the one side than on the other. Disraeli, now as before Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Derby's Conservative Government, now as before confronted by a hostile

majority in the House of Commons, was the first to use it for this purpose. It became known in the autumn of 1858 that the Conservative chiefs were preparing a measure on the subject to be laid before Parliament in the Session of 1859.

They had the disadvantage of finding the ground pre-occupied by the great classic orator of Radicalism with a Radical programme. Restored to Parliamentary life by the choice of a city since found unfaithful to the principles he held most dear, John Bright had spent the autumn recess in delivering a series of speeches at Birmingham, Manchester, and Glasgow on behalf of Parliamentary reform. Of these it will be enough to say that the reasons just given for the reconstitution of our representative system have been chiefly drawn from the materials they supply, and that the scheme they advocate differs from that since adopted with the consent of all parties only by being somewhat less democratic.

At the time Bright's oratorical campaign failed of its intended effect, and was acknowledged by his friends to be a failure. His opposition to the Russian and Chinese wars may have discredited his advocacy of any other cause; and the generally prosperous state of the working classes left them pretty well satisfied with things as they were. But his impressive caution against accepting any such illusory compromise as the Conservative scheme threatened to be sealed beforehand the fate of Disraeli's Reform Bill. No one who studies the provisions of that Bill can possibly accept as sincere the modern claim of the Conservatives to be a democratic party, although they may sometimes

use demagogic methods. Indeed, at that time their leaders made no such pretence. Lord Derby stated in 1852 that "one of the chief objects of his Government would be to stem the tide of democracy";[1] and a little earlier Disraeli pledged himself to oppose any measure having for its object to displace "the territorial influence and power" by which the country had been hitherto governed.[2] Accordingly, his own Bill was based on private information obtained from a number of territorial magnates giving satisfactory assurances that their power would not be endangered by its enfranchising clauses.[3] In fact, those clauses were so framed as to admit none but new middle-class voters, and to make the hold of the Tory country gentlemen on the counties stronger than ever.

Lord John Russell moved the rejection of this paltry measure, on the express ground that it left the borough franchise unaltered; in other words, because it kept up the exclusion of the working classes from power. His amendment was carried by a majority of 39, and the Conservative Government appealed to the country—that is, to the million electors of whom one-fifth returned more than half the House. They won twenty-four seats, and might have won enough to give them a working majority had not Italy intervened. For the elections really turned on the question whether, in the war that had just begun, England's moral support should be given to Austria, whose cause the Conservative statesmen thought a

[1] Bright, *Speeches*, p. 280 (People's edition).
[2] Molesworth, *History of England*, vol. ii., p. 407.
[3] Walpole, *History of Twenty-Five Years*, vol. i., p. 187.

good one, or to France and Piedmont, who were backed by Palmerston and Russell. When Parliament met it placed the Whig leaders in power by a majority of 13 only. To the general surprise, Gladstone, who had spoken and voted for the Conservative Reform Bill, took office in the new Ministry as Chancellor of the Exchequer—a step marking the definite junction of the Peelites with the Whigs. As love of Italy was the only point on which he agreed with Palmerston, the head of the new Administration, against the Conservative leaders, we shall probably not be mistaken in looking on this as the decisive element of the situation. We shall see in the next chapter how English political history, for the next six years, resolves itself entirely into a history of England's relations with the rest of the world.

Chapter XI.

LIGHT FROM THE WEST

Hardly had the new Liberal Cabinet been formed when it became of more vital moment than ever to Italian independence that it should have the support of the English Government and people. Two great French victories in the field had freed Lombardy from the Austrians, and with Austria's defeats the petty despotisms of Central Italy had fallen. Then suddenly the two Emperors, shocked by the carnage incident to their last battle, stopped the war. Napoleon III. failed to carry out his promise that Italy should be free from the Alps to the Adriatic. Austria ceded Lombardy, but retained Venice. The dispossessed Princes were to be restored, and Italian unity reduced to the mockery of a Confederation under the presidency of Pius IX. The details of this precious arrangement were to be settled by a European Congress. Then Italy's statesmen and people took the matter into their own hands, and, working all the time with consummate prudence, baffled the French Emperor's irresolute counsels by the logic of accomplished facts. Everywhere in Central Italy the proposal for union with Piedmont under King Victor Emanuel was accepted by enormous majorities. Napoleon III., who had forfeited all claim to Savoy by failing to carry out his original engagement,

now exacted its cession, and the cession of Nice also, as the price of tolerating this large addition to the territory of his ally.

The Italians had to yield, but they retorted by another bold stroke. Sicily, always writhing under the Bourbon yoke, took advantage of the general revolutionary movement to rise against it once more in the spring of 1860. With the connivance of the North Italian Government a thousand or more volunteers sailed to her assistance in May. At their head was Garibaldi, the popular hero of Italian liberty, famous for his defence of Rome against the French in 1849, and for his victories over Austrian troops in some of the minor engagements of 1859. Those former exploits were now eclipsed by the glory of his Sicilian campaign, in which he fought unaided and fought with brilliant success. What delays he experienced were caused by the unwillingness of Francesco Crispi, then and always his country's bane, to accept Victor Emanuel as King. Still, not much time was lost, for in August Garibaldi crossed over to the mainland, and on September 7th entered Naples, amid the frenzied enthusiasm of the populace. Meanwhile, a Piedmontese army sent by Cavour crossed the Papal frontier, defeated the Pope's mercenaries, liberated the Marches, and joined hands with Garibaldi's volunteers in October.

The rest belongs to Italian history. What interests us here is England's part in freeing Italy from foreign domination. This was considerable, perhaps decisive. In the European negotiations that followed the Peace of Villafranca, diplomacy had to deal more particularly with the question,

should the Central Italian States, including part of what had once been Pontifical territory, be permitted to annex themselves to Piedmont? Austria did not like such proceedings; French politicians rather dreaded, and French Catholics abhorred them; Queen Victoria and Prince Albert sympathised with the dispossessed dynasts. But Palmerston and Russell, with Gladstone's full support, steadily insisted on the right of the people to determine their own fate, and in the end they won the diplomatic game. Again, when it was proposed by the French Foreign Minister that the French and English fleets should prevent Garibaldi from crossing the Straits of Messina, Lord John Russell refused his consent, and our allies shrank from acting alone. Finally—although this is not yet a historical certainty—there is reason to believe that, not content with having exacted Savoy and Nice as the price of his acquiescence in the annexation of Central Italy, Napoleon III. was preparing to sell his agreement to the union of all Italy for further territorial concessions, the island of Sardinia, or Sardinia and Genoa, being mentioned as possible objects of plunder. On hearing this, Palmerston, whether he believed the rumour or not, distinctly gave it to be understood that England would oppose herself, if necessary by force of arms, to any such depredations.[1] Already, as regards Savoy, Lord John Russell had expressed himself in terms of no measured indignation, and his attitude had Palmerston's full approval. As our Ministers had certainly no intention of fighting France on

[1] Ashley, *Life of Palmerston* (1846–1865), vol ii., p. 182.

that subject, their remonstrance has been ridiculed as so much impotent bluster. But, as a warning to the French Emperor that any further schemes of plunder on his part would encounter more active resistance, the strong language used may not have been entirely thrown away.

Nor was this menace limited to words. In view of a possible French invasion the Volunteer Movement, begun during the Crimean War in Devonshire, received an immense impulse after the events of 1858 and 1859; while Palmerston made it a paramount object of his second Administration to see that the English arsenals should be placed in an adequate defensive condition, and that the fleet should be kept at full fighting strength.

Palmerston and Gladstone were both disciples of Canning; and it now seemed as if, under their auspices, Canning's principles were to be applied all over the world with brilliant success. Constitutional government on the English model had at length been given to Italy, and a beginning of the same system showed itself in Austria after the war of 1859, coupled with some recognition of Hungarian autonomy. At Cobden's persuasion, Napoleon III. accepted a commercial treaty with England, substituting a certain measure of free trade for the traditional French policy of protectionist exclusion. This, combined with the liberation of Italy and the partial surrender of Papal territory to the new Italian kingdom, took away so much of that Conservative and Catholic support which had hitherto been a mainstay of the Second Empire that the reactionary despot of 1852 had to seek for support

among freethinking Liberals, granting a little more freedom to the Press, and full publicity to the debates, in which a handful of Opposition speakers eloquently took part.

Beyond the Atlantic also, English ideas of liberty seemed to be gaining ground. After a long struggle, in which, thanks to the help of Northern Democrats, the Southern slaveholders had hitherto been invariably successful, the anti-slavery party at last succeeded in carrying the election of Abraham Lincoln, their candidate for the Presidency of the United States, in November, 1860. Although personally an Abolitionist, Lincoln did not stand as such, but as a Free-soiler—that is, as pledged to oppose the extension of slavery into the vast territory between the Mississippi and the Pacific, not yet organised into entirely self-governing States, but destined one day to become the most powerful section of the Union. Now slavery, shut up within its old limits, would be doomed by economic causes to ultimate extinction ; and, apart from that prospect, the Southern planters were persuaded that the Free States, when they commanded a sufficient majority, would have become so infected with Abolitionist principles as to demand a change in the Constitutional provision guaranteeing the perpetuity of their peculiar institution.

Without exactly understanding what was decided by Lincoln's election, the English middle classes joyfully welcomed it as a triumph for the anti-slavery cause that they had long held so dear ; and our democratic reformers in particular looked forward hopefully to the removal of a standing reproach to institutions they were accustomed to

hold up as in all other respects an example for English imitation.

Lincoln's election was followed in a few weeks by the break-up of the American Union. All the slave States seceded and set up a new Confederacy, of which slavery was declared to be the corner-stone. Opinion in the Northern States hesitated for some time as to whether the South should be let go in peace, or won back by fresh guarantees to slavery, or coerced back into the Union by armed force. English opinion at first went with the North, while assuming separation to be inevitable. A wit suggested that when the flag was divided the North should take the stars, leaving the stripes to the South. Unfortunately, our presuming to have any opinion at all on the subject was bitterly resented by the sensitive American people, and violent attacks were made on England in the American newspapers.[1]

There are occasions on which the President of the United States exercises autocratic power, and this was one of them. Entering on his exalted functions in March, 1861, Lincoln declared his intention of upholding the Federal Constitution according to the strict letter of the law. South Carolina, one of the seceding States, replied by firing on the Federal flag and capturing a Federal fortress. Then at last the majority of the American people resolved to maintain their national existence by force of arms, and a civil war, the most tremendous in all history, began.

When the news of this resolution reached our

[1] For evidence of this see Herbert Spencer, *Facts and Comments,* and his *Autobiography.*

shores, English upper and middle-class opinion underwent a remarkable change. Its sympathies still went with freedom, but the freedom was of a different sort. It was not now the freedom of an individual labourer to choose his own master, but the freedom of a whole people to choose the form of government they preferred to live under. For violating that right we had fought Russia, and were willing to fight Austria. For asserting that right Italy, Hungary, and Poland had won our applause. For its sake we had helped the Belgians, who were bigoted Romanists, against the Dutch, who were our fellow-Protestants, and were racially akin to us. Then, again, it seemed peculiarly unbecoming and inconsistent that the Americans, of all people, who owed their own national existence to a successful rebellion against their lawful Sovereign, should refuse to admit the same justification when urged against themselves, and should even fling the name of "rebel" as a term of reproach at those who did but inherit the tradition of Washington and Jefferson, Southerners and slave-holders also. Besides, our own experience seemed to show that the attempt to coerce Americans was not only unjustifiable, but hopeless. The Southerners were in a minority, but they were a hardy and high-spirited race, fighting in their own country for all they held most dear, with men born and trained to command at their head. History offered no example to show that such resistance as might be expected from them could be overcome.[1] Finally,

[1] The fate of the Swiss Sonderbund had been quite forgotten in 1861.

the boasted English tradition of always siding with the weaker party—singularly illustrated in recent years by the attacks on our own pro-Boers—furnished an argument without appeal for siding with the South.

Plausible as such reasonings might seem, they betrayed a complete misconception of the real interests at stake. Neither England herself nor any other homogeneous European State would have tamely submitted to such a fate as that which America was invited to accept without a struggle. Italy, Hungary, and Poland offered no parallel to the case of the seceding States. They differed in language, race, and tradition from the Powers which held them in bondage by brutally offensive means. Nor did the conflict between England and her colonies furnish an appropriate parallel; for that arose from an endeavour on the side of the Mother-country to violate the liberties of self-governing dependencies, which, moreover, were not an integral part of her nationality. Many people were so impressed by eager Northern disclaimers of any wish to interfere with slavery that they quite overlooked the legitimate claim of the Federal Government to preserve its authority intact. And they equally overlooked the decisive circumstance that the Confederates were fighting to preserve slavery for ever and ever—which should alone have sufficed to alienate the sympathies of an Abolitionist nation, as indeed it did draw the sympathies of Continental Liberalism to the North.

So well did the pro-Southerners appreciate the strength of English prejudice against slavery that they had to put forward a tariff question as the

pretended cause of separation. Then, as now, American interests were divided, the Southern planters being Free Traders and the Northern manufacturers Protectionists. These latter took advantage of the secession to pass a Protectionist measure, the Morrill Tariff, in all haste through Congress. But to represent their conduct as a justification for the South was a singular inversion of cause and effect, only to be accounted for by a very powerful exercise of the will to believe.

As to the expediency of fighting for the Union and the possibility of maintaining it by force, time has proved that Lincoln was a better prophet than the bulk of the educated classes in England. It has to be mentioned, however, that one Englishman did distinctly foretell the ultimate victory of the North. This was not a practical statesman or a soldier, but the idealist philosopher John Stuart Mill.[1] Whether the victory was or was not bought too dear may, of course, be disputed. But if, as seems likely, those four years of fighting have effectually prevented any future wars on the North American Continent, even such a frightful sacrifice of blood and treasure has not been made in vain.

A crushing defeat suffered by the chief Northern army at the beginning of the war inspired our respectable classes with a belief in the invincibility of the South which never wavered until its final collapse. Hatred for American democracy naturally sent the whole Tory party and Tory Press to the

[1] See his *Conflict in America,* first published in *Fraser's Magazine,* February, 1862 (reprinted in *Dissertations and Discussions,* vol. iii.).

side of the slaveholders.[1] And for the reasons above stated the greater number of London Liberal newspapers went with them. Among these were *The Times, The Morning Post, The Daily Telegraph, The Saturday Review, The Examiner,* and *Punch.* The North found its principal advocate in *The Daily News,* to which Harriet Martineau contributed three leading articles of supreme ability every week. It was also supported by *The Morning Star* and *The Spectator,* at that time a less widely circulated journal than it has since become.

The leading Liberal statesmen then in power—especially those who favoured Italy—favoured the South. The Foreign Secretary, now raised to the peerage as Earl Russell, described the war as waged for empire on the one side, and for independence on the other. The learned and philosophic Cornewall Lewis wrote to a friend that the South fought for independence, the North "to gratify passion and pride."[2] Gladstone, speaking at a time when nationalities were thought sacred, declared that Jefferson Davis, the Confederate President, had "made a nation of the South." Lord Palmerston, from his high position, felt bound to greater reserve; but, speaking in the House of Commons, he did not hesitate to stigmatise as "infamous" a disciplinary order issued by General Butler as Federal Governor of New Orleans.

On this question, as on the Italian question,

[1] In Parliament and on the platform Disraeli kept his pro-Southern sympathies under a veil, but they are disclosed in *Lothair.*

[2] Lewis, *The Administrations of Great Britain,* Preface, p. xx.

Queen Victoria held views directly opposed to those of her Ministers. In both instances she was probably under the influence of her husband, who, like most enlightened Germans, sided against the slaveholders. As it happened, the opinions of the royal pair, while they had no influence on the fate of Italy, told decisively on the fate of America. At the end of 1861 two Southern emissaries, named Slidell and Mason, while on their way to plead the cause of the Confederacy in Europe, were seized on board an English mail steamer, the *Trent,* by Captain Wilkes, the commanding officer of an American warship, and carried captive to Washington. When the news of this lawless action—for such it was—reached England the Government, after due consultation with the law officers of the Crown, resolved to demand the surrender of Slidell and Mason from the American authorities. A despatch in that sense was accordingly drafted and laid before the Queen for her approval. Prince Albert, at that time already smitten by a mortal disease, still retained strength and discretion enough to study the draft, and to suggest such alterations in the wording as to convert Palmerston's imperious summons into a reasonable demand that the United States Government could agree to, as in fact they did, without any loss of self-respect.

Thus the two countries were saved from the calamity of war. But in another way the governing classes of England were enabled to give considerable though indirect help to the Slave Power. Prevented by a close blockade from sending out native privateers to prey on the merchant shipping

of the North, the Confederate chiefs supplied themselves with armed cruisers for that purpose from the dockyards of Birkenhead. While one of these, the *Alabama,* was building, the American Minister in London drew Lord Russell's attention to her obvious destination, and asked to have her stopped. Trusting to the report of a subordinate, the Foreign Secretary refused to interfere. A subsequent and more urgent remonstrance was referred to the Queen's Advocate. An attack of illness prevented him from giving immediate attention to the case. Pending his decision, an embargo ought, of course, to have been laid on the suspected ship; but this obvious precaution was delayed, as if intentionally, until it came too late. When orders for her detention ultimately arrived at Liverpool, the *Alabama* had already escaped, and was on her way to begin a career of successful depredation which continued for nearly two years. Lord Russell, to do him justice, proposed in the Cabinet that the British-built privateer, which had never even entered a Confederate harbour, should be arrested in any British or Colonial port where she put in; but even so very moderate a measure of reparation was refused by his colleagues. To some it may seem that the employment of England's whole naval strength for her capture on the high seas would not have been excessive severity. In 1871 an international Court of Arbitration condemned our country to pay over three millions sterling as compensation for the damage done by the *Alabama* and her consorts to American shipowners. What ought by rights to have been exacted from Messrs. Laird of Birkenhead, who

built this mischief-making cruiser with the full knowledge of her destination, and from their abettors in the Cabinet, was taken out of the pockets of the people.

A more subtle effect of the American war on English public opinion has now to be considered. Our Radicals had long looked across the Atlantic for their example, if not for their ideal. But with the temporary break-up of the Union a terrible discredit fell on democracy, which now seemed incompatible with the existence of a great Power. That the Americans were struggling desperately to preserve their national existence gave occasion to fresh reproach, as the war temporarily put an end to personal liberty in both the contending Republics. And some people confidently predicted that the most successful general would possess himself of despotic power on the conclusion of the war. Meanwhile the most was made of the military and financial errors necessarily incidental to so great a conflict waged by an inexperienced administration. Southern successes, due to a defensive position and to the presence of more professional officers than the Northern armies could obtain, were credited to the aristocratic character of the slave power. It seemed to be forgotten for what military disasters our own aristocratic institutions had been responsible. In striking contrast to George III., Lincoln always put the ablest generals he could find in high command, so that in two years the ablest of all came to the top.

All this time the splendour and prosperity of the Second Empire was exercising a fascination on

English upper-class opinion which told also in an anti-democratic sense. More especially Napoleon III.'s Free Trade policy, although inspired by an English Liberal, tended to prejudice men's minds against free representative government; for the commercial treaty with England was unquestionably imposed on France by a despot's will.

With public opinion given over to reactionary political influences, it was inevitable that Parliamentary reform should be shelved. The Liberal Government had redeemed the promise on whose strength they regained office in 1859, by introducing, in 1860, a Bill that would have increased the electorate by thirty-five per cent. But, being received with indifference both by the House and the people, it died of sheer neglect. There could not have been a better proof that the last general election had been won, not on the question of reform, but on the question of Italian independence. And, although the American Civil War had nothing to do with this failure, not having then begun, it effectually prevented the question from being revived for some years to come.

The short-lived Parliament of 1857 was in other ways more Liberal than its successor. A Bill for the Abolition of Church Rates, which passed the Commons by a majority of sixty-three in 1858, was defeated over and over again in the 'sixties. In 1858, also, the Commons forced the Lords to admit Jews to Parliament. In 1860 they only passed the repeal of the paper duty, a tax on knowledge, by a majority of nine, and then submitted to its reimposition by the Lords. Next year it only passed by

eighteen votes, the resistance of the Upper House being this time with extreme difficulty overcome. The session of 1858 saw also the abolition of the property qualification for members of Parliament—one of the points of the Charter. But the greatest triumph of reason over tradition was won the year before, when the divorce law, as it now exists, first came into being. Before that date marriage with an unfaithful partner could be dissolved only by a special Act of Parliament, obtainable only after two distinct suits, in two separate law courts, had been won. Practically, of course, this meant the denial of redress to all but the very rich; while among the rich, with very few exceptions, it was granted only to men. What share superstition had in the resistance offered to the Divorce Bill is shown by the fact that Gladstone fought it clause by clause in the Commons Committee, and that fourteen Bishops against two wished to prohibit the re-marriage of divorced persons. Palmerston's stubborn resolution alone saved the Bill, which, as it was, escaped wreckage in the Lords only by two votes. But for his firmness it might have been delayed till thirty years later.

A reactionary Ministry and Parliament might well have plunged the country into war with America by breaking the blockade of the Southern ports, had they not been held back by the silent determination of those most interested in the matter—the English people. Of these, according to no friendly witness, Earl Russell, the majority—that is to say, the working classes—sympathised with the North. Their choice did them the more honour

because vast numbers of operatives engaged in the cotton manufacture had been deprived of their subsistence by the stoppage of the raw material, for which at that time we were almost entirely dependent on the plantations of the Southern slaveholders, who, indeed, would probably not have kindled a civil war but for their confident reliance on the necessities of the English market. Now, the patience and dignity with which the operatives—and not these alone, but also the small traders who lived on their custom—bore the sufferings of what was called the Cotton Famine gave the upper classes quite a new idea of their worth; while again the liberality of all who were not themselves in want to the sufferers gave these a friendlier feeling towards those above them in the social scale.[1]

Besides this very obvious reaction, the American War exercised another and profounder effect on the future of English Liberalism. It dissociated the democratic cause from the idea of peace at any price, from the taint of a supposed devotion to material interests, from the suspected bias of antipatriotism. If reform excited no enthusiasm, this indifference, as has been already observed, owed something to the fact that its most eloquent advocate, John Bright, had made himself unpopular by opposing the Russian War. But now Bright came forward as also the most eloquent advocate of the North; and, although he never fairly faced the

[1] I am sorry to have to mention, as a dark shade in this otherwise pleasing picture, the infamous calumny, long circulated among the respectables, that John Bright contributed nothing to the relief of the operatives. The real fact, if I remember rightly, is that he sacrificed the savings of a lifetime in helping them through the crisis.

implications of his championship, it constituted a virtual admission that there were circumstances in which a sanguinary war might with justice be waged—not only, as by Poles, Hungarians, and Italians, for national independence, but also, as Lincoln said over the dead of Gettysburg, that government of the people, by the people, for the people should not perish from the earth.

While the friends of peace were pointing England to the paths of honour and safety, the friends of intervention were dragging her through excruciating alternatives between disaster and shame. First came the ineffective Ministerial attacks, already mentioned, on the French Emperor for his annexation of Savoy and Nice. Then the Polish insurrection of 1863 gave a fresh opportunity, which was not neglected, for addressing Platonic remonstrances to Russia. On this occasion Lord Russell got France and Austria to join in the ridiculous performance, which only drew down on them the cool and cutting insolence of Prince Gortchakoff, the Russian Chancellor. Our Foreign Secretary never intended to fight for Poland; but the next European complication that arose involved a serious risk of war. This was the Schleswig-Holstein question. We need not enter into the legal intricacies of that fateful affair. It will suffice to mention that the interests of a considerable German population were at stake, whose wishes for a long time won no more attention than if they had been a flock of sheep. All were forcibly attached to the Crown of Denmark, which passed into a new family towards the end of 1863;

while some were forcibly incorporated with the Danish kingdom, and subjected to the oppression of Danish administrators, who tried to deprive them of their German nationality. When the change of dynasty took place, the smaller German members of the Diet sent troops into Holstein, which was a member of the Germanic Confederation, but refrained from entering Schleswig. Count Bismarck, the Prussian Prime Minister, saw and used the opportunity to intervene. Taking the work out of the feeble hands of the Diet, he persuaded Austria to join Prussia in occupying both the Duchies with their combined armies.

Bismarck was, at that time, not popular either in Germany or in England. Animated, like Cavour, by the highest patriotic purposes, and, like Cavour, absolutely unscrupulous in the means he adopted for carrying them out, this man had resolved to attempt again what the Parliament of Professors had failed to achieve in 1848—the union of all Germany, under the supremacy of Prussia. Seeing that the expulsion of Austria from the Germanic Confederation was a necessary preliminary to this work; seeing, further, that, in his own vigorous language, her expulsion had to be effected, not by speeches and resolutions, but by blood and iron, he began by re-fashioning the Prussian army into an irresistible weapon of war. His object could not be publicly explained; and the Prussian Representative Chamber, fearing that the new model might be used to destroy the small amount of public liberty then existing, refused to grant the necessary supplies. Bismarck, with his master's support, raised taxes on the sole authority of the Upper

House. A grave constitutional crisis seemed imminent, and ominous references to Charles I. and Strafford ran round the German Press; but the taxes were obediently paid, and the policy of the great Minister triumphed.

It triumphed no less signally abroad than at home. The policy of the German Powers excited the indignation of the English people, who, as usual, supposed that, because they were strong, they must also be wrong. It so happened that an interesting domestic occurrence enlisted their sympathies still more deeply on the Danish side. Early in 1863 the Prince of Wales had married the beautiful daughter of the Prince to whom diplomacy had assigned the fateful heritage of Denmark and the Duchies. The charms of this young lady won all hearts, and many Don Quixotes longed to send over champions to fight for her injured sire. Palmerston vainly tried to form a triple alliance with France and Russia, vainly blustered about what England's unaided strength could do. With the Queen and the majority of the Cabinet against him, he could only convene a Conference in London, which failed to reconcile the belligerents. Denmark fought on, but had to lay down her arms in a few weeks, lured to her ruin, men thought, by a blind reliance on England's help.

Canning's policy, in the hands of his most brilliant successor, after freeing Italy, had suffered three signal defeats. It was now utterly bankrupt, and could no more stave off the new Reform Bill than it had staved off the old.

The first to recognise the change in public

opinion wrought by the influence of the American War, combined with the collapse of our foreign policy, was Gladstone. Before the close of the Danish question his adhesion to the democratic cause was announced in a powerful speech on a private Bill for lowering the franchise, which at once marked him out as its coming leader. But in the cause of religious Liberalism he still lagged behind, giving only an equivocal support to Irish Church disestablishment, and frankly opposing the abolition of university tests. Yet the currents of public opinion were flowing with a greater impetus in that direction, and were destined to effect as rapid a revolution. We have now to trace the history of the great intellectual movement to which they gave expression, and which constitutes so vital an element in the English history of the later nineteenth century.

Chapter XII.

COSMIC ECONOMY

In a former chapter we traced the development of English philosophy, science, literature, and religious thought, down to a point approximately dated by the outbreak of the Russian War. We have now to deal with a period of about equal length, roughly coinciding with the political supremacy of Lord Palmerston. There is no sharp line of demarcation between the two, and to a certain extent they even overlap. But, on the whole, we shall not be mistaken in saying that, while the first is a period of quiet seed-time in which ideas are prepared, outlined, and either tentatively put forward or stored up for future use, in the second they are ripened, elaborated, applied, and, so to speak, violently exploded on the world, with the result of obtaining, if not its assent, at least its full attention and respect.

The Palmerstonian period is also one of hero-worship, of splendid publicity and homage given not only to ideas, but even more to their representatives ; a time when work done with little honour in the previous years comes in for universal recognition and applause, with this effect also that new reputations are made at a single stroke, being rapidly imposed by the best judges on the multitude of listeners. I have said that the Conservative

reaction under Peel, by diverting the English intellect from practice to theory and imagination, contributed to, if it did not create, the great ideal achievements of the early Victorian age. Now in the Palmerstonian period a fresh source of energy comes into play—the ready reception given to new genius, the hope of winning immediate applause, the certainty almost of winning it when genius is displayed. It seems as if the French alliance and the fashionableness of French things gives a certain French tone to our ways of thinking; while mere brilliancy being much less common here than in France, the true superiorities are not yet discouraged and crowded out by the mediocrities of distinction.

Thus it happens that the value and literary power of Carlyle, Grote, and Macaulay among historians, of Dickens, Thackeray, and Charlotte Brontë among novelists, of Tennyson and the Brownings among poets, of Ruskin as an æsthetician, of Maurice as a theologian, of Mill as a philosopher and publicist, although founded on previous performances whose eminence contemporary critics had not failed to recognise, seem first to have found universal admission between the early 'fifties and 'sixties; while, again, Anthony Trollope, Charles Reade, and George Eliot in fiction, Froude in history, Jowett in theology, Bain and Herbert Spencer in philosophy, Buckle and Maine in sociology, Darwin in science, Matthew Arnold in criticism, and Swinburne in poetry, reach their full reputation immediately after the publication of their first very important works, which fall within the specified period.

On looking back across this distance of time to all those high and diversified activities, one is most impressed by the complete emergence and incipient triumph of a single idea—the idea of evolution. But that idea would have been self-contradictory had it come as a sudden revelation, or had it effected an instantaneous transformation of thought. We have seen, in fact, how Robert Chambers applied the doctrine of development as a universal law of change in the *Vestiges,* thus preparing the way for Spencer and Darwin. Hardly any advance has since been made on his general arguments, which at the time when they appeared would have been accepted as convincing but for theological truculence and scientific timidity. And Chambers himself only gave unity to thoughts already in wide circulation. Progress and development were great words in English, French, and German philosophy at the time of the French Revolution. But they had a very uphill battle to fight along the whole line. The theory of catastrophes in geology, the theory of immutable species in biology, the mediæval enthusiasm of the Romanticists, the dogma of human corruption in theology —these were among the obstacles to be overcome.

What ultimately secured the victory for evolution was the cumulative argument, the convergence of effects, the concentration of forces on a single point of attack, the interpenetration of ideas constantly thought of together. Neither Comte nor Mill was an evolutionist; but the *Positive Philosophy* and the *System of Logic* tended to make their readers evolutionists by bringing nature and man under the same categories. Human history

subjected to order gave progress in return as a constitutive principle to biology. And a really universal law of causation must include the formation by some physical process of new organic species from pre-existing forms of matter. Now, to repeat what has been said before, it seemed infinitely more probable that those pre-existing forms were slightly different organisms than that they were unorganised matter.

Such was the line taken by a very vigorous and independent thinker, who happened to be also a clergyman, Baden Powell (father of the celebrated General), at that time Professor of Astronomy at Oxford. He had been a strenuous opponent of the Tractarian Movement, and he now resisted with equal energy the narrow Biblical Evangelicalism which had profited by its collapse to impose a degrading Sabbatarian tyranny on the necks of Englishmen. By way of giving a religious colouring to the higher education, University teaching had been kept in the hands of the clergy, with the result that at Oxford the ablest clerics had mostly become freethinkers, and of these Baden Powell was one. Perhaps from being behind the scenes he had learned to look on ecclesiastical terrors with more contempt than his lay brethren. At any rate, no other official representative of science adhered to the general doctrine of the *Vestiges* with the fearless publicity of this Professor.

Granting that, with the exclusion of supernatural interference from the order of nature, evolution became a logical necessity of thought, the question arose by what physical agency the production of

organic species had been accomplished. Geologists had no difficulty in explaining how the present conformation of the earth's crust had come about, for the forces determining its shape and composition might be seen perpetually at work. Astronomers had never witnessed the birth of a stellar system ; but physical analogies enabled them to interpret it as a process of condensation on the largest scale. Millenniums of recorded experience taught historians how social structures are built up. But no human eye had ever seen a new species come into existence, nor could naturalists name any force capable of creating so much as a new beetle. Palæontology proved that the marvel had somehow or other come about over and over again in geologic time ; how it came about remained a mystery. Robert Chambers sought the key in embryology, which is indeed an abridged record of evolution, suggesting the successive transformations of one living type into another ; but it merely gives evidence of the changes, leaving their causes unexplained.

Help came from the social sciences, and especially from the most complete among them, which was Political Economy. Since Adam Smith, the increasing division of labour had been a recognised note of industrial progress ; and Aristotle, the greatest naturalist of antiquity, had long ago pointed out that in the higher animal organisms the physiological division of labour is more perfect than in the lower. But neither Aristotle nor Milne-Edwards, who revived his doctrine in the last century, connected it with evolution, which, indeed, neither of them accepted. This step seems

to have been first taken by Herbert Spencer in an essay on " Progress," published by the *Westminster Review* in 1857.

The industrial division of labour is an arrangement designedly entered into by the members of a human society for their common advantage. We cannot suppose that the components of an animal or vegetal organism are capable of such conscious adjustments to each other's convenience; and so some other cause must be sought to account for the physiological division of labour.

Such a cause is suggested by the economical idea of competition. Malthus has explained how this force is brought to bear on society by the law of population. The number of individuals to be fed tends to grow faster than the means of feeding them. Hence arises a struggle for existence, in which the stronger or better equipped survive, and the weaker or worse equipped perish. Therefore, an organism which in some way or other has become more differentiated than its competitors will beat them out of the field, just as a society will when it possesses a similar advantage. And the same holds true of every imaginable superiority by which one individual or species is distinguished from the rest. Speaking generally, what is best adapted to the conditions of life has the best chance of living and of propagating its kind.

England was the European country where the growth of population and the resulting competition for the means of subsistence most obtruded themselves on public notice, and first became subjects of systematic study. And so for thirty years Englishmen alone had the happy idea of extending

the competitive principle to biology, and using it as a method for explaining the origin of varieties and species. In 1813 Wells, to whom we owe the true theory of dew, accounted for the different colours of the different races of mankind by natural selection; in 1831 Matthew, a botanist, applied it to organic evolution in general; in 1852 Herbert Spencer used what he called "the survival of the fittest" to explain the development of brain-power in man; while at the same time Charles Darwin and Mr. A. R. Wallace, quite unknown to him and to each other, were working out the law of natural selection over the whole field of animal and vegetal life. Their views were first made public in 1858, and Darwin brought out his *Origin of Species* in the following year. Only the adverse influence of religious opinion can account for such a long delay; and, in fact, one of England's foremost naturalists, Richard Owen, in a private conversation with a clergyman soon after the publication of Darwin's book, blamed the great discoverer for offending vulgar prejudice, and himself tried to crush the new theory, with which he agreed all the time, by a coldly supercilious criticism, which he never thought fit to acknowledge, in the *Edinburgh Review*.

Evolution gave offence to theological prejudice in three distinct ways. It contradicted the obvious meaning of what most people had been taught to accept as an inspired and infallible account of the origin of things in the Bible. It destroyed Paley's argument for the existence of God—that is, the attempt to show that the structure of the animal body can only be accounted for on the hypothesis

that it is the work of an intelligent creator. And by deriving the human race from an animal ancestor it suggested that the human soul is reserved for no higher destinies than the soul of a brute. This last departure from current orthodoxy was the most easily intelligible and the most likely to excite popular feeling against the new views. Even Lyell, who accepted Darwinism as a whole, could not reconcile himself to man's derivation from an ape-like ancestor; while Carlyle, who, disbelieving as he did in miracles, would have been puzzled to find any other genealogy, rejected it with utter abhorrence. *The Daily Telegraph*, at that time a Liberal newspaper, tried to excite a prejudice against Fawcett, the future Liberal Minister, among the electors of Southwark, on the ground that he had written a favourable notice of Darwin in *Macmillan's Magazine*.

A few months before the Southwark election Darwinism had come up for discussion at the annual meeting of the British Association. Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, who had some pretensions to figure as a man of science, took part in the debate, and so far forgot his good manners as to ask Professor Huxley, who represented the evolutionist side, whether he was descended from an ape through his grandfather or his grandmother. Huxley, who excelled the Bishop as much in sarcasm as in science, answered that he would prefer such an ancestor to a rhetorician who sought to cover his ignorance of the question by irrelevant appeals to religious prejudice.

It has become the fashion among more recent

theologians to contend that, assuming what they admit to be highly probable, the derivation of man's body from an ape-like ancestor, his mind owes its origin to some higher process of creation—which, indeed, is only another way of saying that mind does not depend on brain. But this line of retreat from an untenable position had been cut off before Darwin's discoveries were made known. Herbert Spencer, already named as one of the early evolutionists, published in 1855 the first draft of his *Principles of Psychology*. Here, at the very outset, he shows by a masterly analysis of the reasoning process that the most abstract mathematical inferences involve no more than a continuous application of the power to identify, combined with the power to discriminate. Now these two powers are exhibited by the humblest creature possessing any trace of consciousness whatever; and these, combined with the power of retention, or memory, which also can be denied to no animal, suffice to account for the highest intellectual acquisitions that have ever been stored in a human mind. And all such exercises of conscious intelligence, however they may vary in quantity, agree in the one essential quality, which alone gives them any value as vital functions—the quality of bringing the organism into harmony with its environment. In other words, the evolution of life is one vast process of natural education, preparing its pupils to hold their own in the battle of life—a principle, of course, not less, but more, applicable to the development of the emotions and the will than to the development of the intellect.

By a remarkable coincidence, just as Darwin and Wallace had rediscovered Natural Selection and

used it to explain the origin of species, independently of one another, so also another psychologist, Alexander Bain, gave substantially the same explanation of reason as Spencer's, in his work on *The Senses and the Intellect,* published at the same time, and, apparently, without any previous communication between the two philosophers. Bain says nothing about evolution, but his analysis was perhaps all the more effective in suggesting a fundamental unity of composition between human and animal intelligence. His work also had at first a much wider circulation than Spencer's *Psychology*.

Spencer belonged to a family of schoolmasters; there was a good deal of the pedagogue in his composition, and a volume on education figures among his miscellaneous works. It therefore lay very near that one with his generalising habits should conceive all experience and all nature as a process of rigorous schooling, conducted on a self-acting system of rewards and punishments, promotions and expulsions, with continual reference to a period of future emancipation, and having for its ideal the ultimate identification of work with play in some far-off society of the future, revived from the dreams of Priestley, Godwin, and Shelley. Thus, in Spencer's case at least, evolution, so far from being a method borrowed by the study of man from the study of nature, seems to be the very reverse—a light thrown back from human experience on unconscious physical processes.

Nor was it educational ideas alone that Spencer used to elucidate the mystery of organic origins. We have seen how both he and others extended

the laws of political economy to all vital phenomena, finding the struggle for existence and the increasing division of labour exemplified in fields unknown to Malthus and Adam Smith. Spencer had been brought up by an uncle zealous for the new Poor Law and the Anti-Corn-Law League, a sworn foe to Protection. By his Nonconformist connections also he had learned to look with profound distrust on State interference with religion and education. Thus, from the conviction that men, for their own good, had better be left to their own natural instincts arose the far wider conviction that, in building up the great edifice of nature, things had been let alone—had been made what they are by the spontaneous play of physical forces without the aid of a superintending Providence, or even the initial impulse of a Creator.

By a curious fatality, the individualistic ideas, so prevalent in his youth, out of which Spencer evolved evolution itself were at first far more intelligible and popular than the vast cosmic philosophy they inspired him to conceive. Then, as time went on and the new theory of a self-made world won ever wider assent, the enthusiasm for self-made men, for self-help, for Individualism, grew less, to the extreme scandal of the aging philosopher, who had become, if possible, a still more confident believer in *laissez-faire,* above all in the matter of national education, on finding it confirmed, as he thought, by the laws of Nature herself. In fact, with far less ingenuity than Spencer's, it is perfectly possible to extract from the laws of nature any system of morality and social organisation that we choose to put into them. When they have constructed their

human system on what seem to be the most rational motives—whether these lead to Individualism or Socialism, or something between the two—philosophers will always be able to satisfy themselves that it is the inevitable outcome of a cosmic evolution.

A thinker of less combining and deducing power than Herbert Spencer, but with more knowledge and greater literary brilliancy, acquired a world-wide reputation by applying much the same economical philosophy to the interpretation of history. This was Henry Thomas Buckle, the first volume of whose famous *History of Civilisation in England* appeared in 1857. Brought up in the same Free Trade and Individualist principles, he showed the same eagerness to read social phenomena by their light. According to Buckle, the Protectionist spirit in Church and State is, and always has been, the great obstacle to advancing civilisation. Where population multiplies very rapidly civilisation does not advance at all, for there the supply of labour always outruns the demand, and so the great majority of the people fall into helpless dependence on the landlords and capitalists. Only in Europe and its Colonies has there been some approach to an emancipation of the masses, and therefore some effective resistance to oppression. Still, even in Europe priests and kings have done untold mischief by undertaking more or less to manage everybody's affairs, and to choose everybody's beliefs for him. Left to themselves, men naturally seek to accumulate knowledge and to accumulate wealth. What they do

ultimately depends on what they know; and, just as political economy studies the laws governing the accumulation and distribution of wealth, so the scientific historian of civilisation has to study in what ways knowledge is acquired and diffused.

We cannot tell how Buckle would have worked out this part of his great scheme, for he did not live to finish even the General Introduction to his *History*. But the book, so far as it goes, contributed very powerfully to the emancipation of English thought from theological prejudices. Here he falls in with the whole trend of modern English historiography. Without concert and without any hint at a common purpose, Dr. Arnold, Carlyle, Grote, Macaulay, Milman, and Froude had all been waging war against the fashionable Romanticism, the Oxford Movement, and Young England. But so far a smug Protestantism had been permitted to reap the fruit of their labours. Now, Buckle made no secret of his opinion that, so far as bigotry and superstition went, there was little to choose between the Catholic and Protestant Churches. It is already prominent in his first volume; while the second, published four years later (1861), illustrates it from beginning to end, Spain and Scotland being made to furnish examples of the ills wrought by priestly domination under widely contrasted forms of theological belief.

Buckle had a profound faith, resting, apparently, on no very logical grounds, in God and a future life; and in his first volume he showed a dislike, amounting to intolerance, of their open denial. Mill, who personally rejected all theology, although

he considered that a fairly good case might be made out for what is called "natural religion," strongly objected to having an embargo laid on its public discussion. To secure this right, it was not enough, in his opinion, that all the legal restrictions on its exercise should be repealed. Alexis de Tocqueville had put into currency a telling phrase, "The tyranny of the majority"; and Mill well knew that such tyranny could make itself felt without any appeal to mob violence. His most popular work, the essay *On Liberty,* published in 1859, has for its object to define the limits beyond which social restraint on the sayings and doings of the individual should not be pushed. According to him, liberty of discussion should be absolute; while liberty of action should be allowed where the actions are purely self-regarding—that is, where the interests of the agent, or of the agents in cases where different persons agree in a common line of conduct, are alone concerned.

Evidently we have here also, as in the case of Buckle and the evolutionists, a generalisation of the economic principles associated with Bentham's school. Bentham himself had no love for liberty or individuality as such, and would not have objected to making people happy without asking their leave, if the thing could be done. Nor does Mill, at least avowedly, claim individual liberty as an indefeasible right. He argues for it as a means, and the best means, for securing the happiness of the community. Nevertheless, it looks as if he had inherited a certain metaphysical bias in favour of liberty as such, which made him more sensible to the utilitarian arguments on its side than to

those that might have been urged on the opposite side.

A hard-and-fast line between society and the units of which it is composed cannot, in fact, be drawn ; and, therefore, no general law of liberty can be laid down. With such an imitative animal as man, an action, to be strictly self-regarding, must also be strictly private, and so by its very nature withdrawn from the cognisance of others. Various vices of a purely self-regarding character may, of course, be very effectually prevented by not allowing the means for indulging in them to be sold. But, on self-defensive principles, society is surely justified in shielding its members against temptation ; and Mill himself seems to admit this in discussing the ethics of public-house legislation, and the expediency of prohibiting the pandar's trade.

In his argument against religious intolerance Mill occupies much firmer ground, though not all of it is of equal value ; and the question of whether or not it is desirable to sanction the education of children in beliefs generally rejected by the educated classes remains untouched. Like most Benthamites, he was against having religion of any kind taught at the public expense.

Mill's claim of the right to question every dogma of religion, even the most fundamental, made at least one illustrious convert in the person of Buckle, who wrote an enthusiastic review of the essay *On Liberty,* and, contrary to the strong language used in his own first volume, expressed his readiness to consider patiently anything that could be said against his own belief in a future life. He also

took the opportunity of denouncing Sir John Coleridge for an oppressive sentence passed on a poor man, found afterwards to be insane, for scribbling some blasphemous expressions on a gate. Holyoake, who supplied Buckle with the information on which he wrote, afterwards admitted that his version of the case was not absolutely correct. At the same time, it remains true that there was a gross miscarriage of justice, directly due to religious prejudice, and that Buckle performed a great public service by exposing it. His conduct, according to Holyoake, "is the only example of a gentleman coming forward in that personal way to vindicate the right of free thought in the friendless and obscure."[1]

Meanwhile a devoted band of scholars were struggling to secure the right to free thought where hitherto it had been held not to exist—that is, among the clergy of the Established Church. We have already seen how, towards the middle of the century, a freethinking movement, which had been gaining ground during the whole previous decade, suddenly burst into public notice. All through the 'fifties a number of writers, representing every shade of advanced opinion, from liberal Christianity to something not very distinguishable from atheism, kept up a fire of criticism on the current religious beliefs. Among others, James Martineau, the foremost Unitarian divine of the century, made himself conspicuous by articles, contributed to the *Westminster* and *National Reviews,* exposing the weakness of clerical apologies

[1] G. J. Holyoake, *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life,* vol. ii., p. 96.

for the old dogmas, and introducing the revolutionary Biblical criticism of Germany to English readers. But the most telling assaults were delivered within the pale of the Establishment itself. A band of clergymen, collectively known as the Broad Church, although some of them earnestly repudiated the name, kept the attention of religious circles on the stretch by the audacity of their speculations, sometimes uttered even in the pulpit. F. W. Robertson, the most powerful of English preachers after Dr. Newman, and F. D. Maurice, the most profound of Anglican theologians, made themselves the organs of a semi-mystical religion, whose positive significance remained much less intelligible than its sharp antagonism to the dogmas of Original Sin and the Atonement, as held by Catholic and Calvinist alike. Maurice, in particular, gave a new interpretation to the Christian doctrine of damnation, which seemed to hold out some hope of final redemption to the lost; but he had to pay for being so far in advance of his age by the surrender of his professorship at King's College, London. However, Maurice's friend and disciple Kingsley continued to preach his gospel, unmolested, to rural congregations in Somerset.

Soon the neology of the cloister, as it was called, far outran the neology of the pulpit. It flourished at Oxford, and most of all in the most intellectual of Oxford Colleges, Balliol, whose then Tutor and future Master, Benjamin Jowett, already passed for being an "infidel" in 1851. In 1855 he edited some of St. Paul's Epistles, with accompanying essays in which his gift for subtle and daring speculation found the freest exercise. Not only

were the current doctrines of the Fall and the Atonement unsparingly dissected, but the hollowness of the stock arguments for Theism was exposed by a few dexterous punctures. His orthodox opponents revenged themselves by compelling him to sign the Thirty-nine Articles on being appointed Greek Professor, and, less excusably, by defeating for several years a proposal for the better endowment of his chair. In this and other ways it was attempted to crush out liberal theology in the Universities.

As a protest against this repressive system, seven liberal theologians issued a collective manifesto of their opinions in the shape of a volume entitled *Essays and Reviews*. All but two of the contributors were Oxford men, and all but one, Charles Goodwin, were clerics. Professor Baden Powell, already mentioned as one of the earliest champions of evolution, sent the most advanced of all the essays. He had recently published a volume on *The Order of Nature,* almost openly denying the possibility of miracles; and of that volume his paper is a simple summary, with the addition of a triumphant reference to Darwin's *Origin of Species*, which had appeared in the interim. Next to this in importance ranks a review of Bunsen's Biblical Researches by Professor Rowland Williams, a Cambridge Hebraist with the Cambridge directness of speech. Without endorsing in all particulars the views of his German guide, Williams intimates pretty plainly that the Bible contains no supernatural predictions, that much of its history is inauthentic, and not all of its morality immaculate. Bunsen's pantheistic

interpretation of the most essential Christian dogmas is also quoted with manifest complacency. H. B. Wilson, who had acted as the informal editor of the volume, practically denies the claim of Christianity to be taken in any exclusive sense as a divine revelation; while Temple, the future Primate, points out that the doctrine of immortality seems to have been discovered without any supernatural aid by the Persians, and borrowed from them by the Jews. The volume closes with a long essay by Professor Jowett, *On the Interpretation of Scripture,* the drift of which is that, if the Bible were read like any other book, much of its supposed dogmatic teaching would melt into air.

A policy of discreet silence in official circles nearly caused *Essays and Reviews* to fail of its intended effect, which was to excite discussion and controversy. Not until ten months after its publication was attention drawn to what had been done. An article in the *Westminster Review* for October, 1860, written by Mr. Frederic Harrison, the future Positivist leader, emphasised with passionate eloquence the true inwardness of the manifesto, at the same time inviting the Essayists to abandon their futile attempts at a compromise between the old beliefs and the new. Bishop Wilberforce followed suit with an article in the *Quarterly Review*, accepting the *Westminster* estimate of the Essayists, but denouncing them as traitors to Christian truth. At his suggestion, also, the whole Bench of Bishops joined in a public protest against the volume. Finally, Arthur Stanley, himself an advanced but extremely reticent Broad Churchman, summed up the situation in the *Edinburgh Review*

with that sort of impartiality which consists in distributing more or less scathing censures all round, his own personal friends Temple and Jowett being alone excepted from the general condemnation.

All these discussions excited public interest to the highest pitch, and the printing-presses could barely keep pace with the demand for a book supposed to have shaken Christianity to its foundations.

Baden Powell, the most advanced Rationalist of the band, had died soon after the publication of *Essays and Reviews*. Of the five remaining clerical contributors only two, Williams and Wilson, had laid themselves open to any tangible charge of heresy, and these two, as it happened, were also beneficed clergymen. They were prosecuted before the Court of Arches, and acquitted on all but a few counts of the accusation. On this occasion the Judge decided that a clergyman might, consistently with his ordination vows, deny the historical accuracy or the moral soundness of any passage in the Bible. On the points where his judgment went against them, Williams and Wilson appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, and obtained a reversal of the adverse sentence in every particular. Of the issues finally decided in their favour the most important related to the eternity of future punishment. The supreme tribunal declared, by the mouth of Lord Chancellor Westbury, that the formularies of the Church were not sufficiently distinct to warrant the condemnation of a clergyman who hoped for the ultimate salvation of the sinner.

Dr. Pusey and his Evangelical allies were less charitably disposed. They drew up a declaration of belief in Scriptural infallibility and the eternity of hell, which every clergyman was invited "for the love of God" to sign. Less than half of those in holy orders responded to this touching appeal; and few names carrying much authority figured in the list.

For those to whom faith means the negation of reason the occasion offered by Pusey must have seemed singularly well-timed. Not long before his declaration was circulated the untrustworthiness of various Biblical statements had been mathematically demonstrated by a missionary Bishop, who was also the greatest living authority on arithmetic. While the foremost German and Dutch Hebraists were exhausting their ingenuity in trying to discover how many distinct documents had been laid under contribution by the compilers of the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua, Dr. Colenso felt himself impelled by the naïve appeal of a Zulu convert to investigate the more elementary question, Are they true? A novice in the higher criticism, he at that time merely knew that geology had done much towards demolishing the first chapters of Genesis as genuine history. But a few months' labour led him to more destructive conclusions than all his predecessors put together had made good in two hundred years. What was more damaging to the credit of the priestly historians whose work has come down to us under the names of Moses and Joshua than their too literal acceptance of ancient mythical cosmogonies, it

appeared, from the Bishop's statistical method of criticism, that they had been guilty over and over again of deliberate fabrication, committed in the interest of their religious beliefs. This discovery came like a revelation to the Dutch critic Kuenen, and soon set him on the track of those new theories which, in his and Wellhausen's hands, have revolutionised the study of Old Testament history and converted the most orthodox divines to views much more advanced than those originally put forward by Colenso.

It is doubtful whether the Bishop of Natal would have felt justified in publishing the result of his inquiries had not the judgment of the Court of Arches proved that their avowal was quite compatible with the retention of his position in the Church. Alluding to the academic rank of the Essayists, Lord Shaftesbury prayed to be saved from the tyranny of Professors. So far from being tyrants, Baden Powell, Rowland Williams, and Jowett were enabling the English middle classes to think for themselves. "By all means let us have free inquiry," said Disraeli, "but let it be from free inquirers." Not only were the clergy free inquirers, but they were guiding the more timid steps of the laity in what Carlyle called the Exodus from Houndsditch—the deliverance from Rabbinical superstition.

Privately some of the Essayists—and indeed some of their opponents also—were known to hold far more subversive opinions than those they put in print; indeed, the hostility to their printed opinions partly arose from a knowledge of their conversational utterances. Not only a desire to

preserve their social position, but also a vague dread of revolutionary convulsions as a result of having Rationalism diffused among the working classes, may have been the excuse for a reticence rather apt to be confounded with insincerity.

Be this as it may, no such need of reticence was felt among those whose mental balance the Broad Church were fearful of upsetting. A tradition not only of free thinking, but of plain speaking, had been kept up by the democratic working-class leaders ever since Thomas Paine; and we have seen to what lengths it was carried by Holyoake. In his hands, however, Secularism remained, like the Positivism of Comte, rather a constructive social doctrine ignoring theology than an aggressive criticism labouring to destroy it. A younger friend of Holyoake's, Charles Bradlaugh, gave Secularism this more aggressive character by setting up, in 1860, a journal called the *National Reformer*, an article in whose programme was avowed "antagonism to every known religious system," and especially to every form of Christianity.[1]

Bradlaugh and his colleagues carried on for several years an Atheistic propaganda by pamphlets and lectures which the upper and middle classes regarded with affected contempt and quite unaffected aversion. Public opinion had by this time advanced so far that the blasphemy laws were not put in action, but a good deal of ruffianism was employed for the purpose of suppressing free discussion, against which the sufferers could not obtain legal redress. Where public debates

[1] *Life of Charles Bradlaugh*, vol. i., p. 120.

between the Freethinkers and their clerical opponents were tolerated, insulting and mendacious personalities too often passed as good substitutes for argument on the orthodox side.

Just as the religious crisis was becoming acute, Herbert Spencer began to publish in serial form the first of those important works which won for him during his life a more extended reputation than any other philosopher in the world's history has ever enjoyed. It was called *First Principles,* and its object was to establish on grounds of experience and of *a priori* reasoning combined the law of evolution as the most comprehensive of scientific generalisations. None knew better than Spencer how radically inconsistent was that law with the belief in a creating or interfering Providence ; and indeed a prime object of all his speculations was to show, so far as possible, that all phenomena are produced by mechanical causation. This was also what the founders of the *National Reformer* believed, and, in their opinion, such a doctrine left no room for anything that has ever been called a God or a religion. Spencer did not agree with their negations. The antiquity and wide diffusion of religion convinced him that there must be some truth mixed up with its errors. On the other hand, even those ultimate truths in which evolution itself is rooted leave us, he thinks, confronted by the inexplicable mystery of consciousness and existence itself, the dim sense of a Power behind phenomena, impossible either to define or to refine away. To recognise that this ever-present Power exists, but can never be known, is the essence of

religion, and also the reconciliation of religion with science.

All that Spencer tells us—and he tells us a good deal—about the Unknowable Power goes to identify it with the whole of what is. Such absoluteness necessarily excludes personality, which at any rate involves the antithesis of subject and object; and his psychology also suggests, to say the least of it, that there is no consciousness without a nervous system. Precisely for that reason, indeed, Spencer rejected the doctrine of personal immortality; and, although he afterwards came to find in the notion of a spirit surviving its mortal body the very root of religion itself, it did not occur to him that his pretended reconciliation of religion with science was thereby ruined at its base.

On the religious side, also, difficulties no less serious opposed themselves to the proffered alliance. Worship has always had for its object not an abstraction or a negation, but a living, concrete individual, conceived as resembling the highest types of humanity; while religious belief, so far from being directed towards an Unknowable, habitually appeals for confirmation to a revelation of its object, given through a book, or a community, or a set of mysterious intimations whose import it is the office of a privileged order to declare.

Some years after the appearance of *First Principles,* Professor Huxley, a friend and admirer of Spencer's, coined the word "Agnosticism" to designate the attitude of himself and his school towards theology. As originally used, it served to connote at once the impassable barrier that separated

them from all the Churches, and the almost imperceptible shading that distinguished them from the followers of Bradlaugh. Like all very popular party-names, Agnosticism paid the penalty of success by losing the perfectly definite meaning it was at first intended to convey, and by becoming associated with all sorts of hazy scepticisms which the original Agnostics would have been the first to disown. An impression has thus been created that those who reject the popular religion have no alternative but a comprehensive profession of ignorance about themselves and the world in which they live. An older and somewhat less ambiguous word, "Rationalism," has been coming into more favour of recent years to denote the position of those who trust their reason so far as it goes, while refusing to believe any proposition on evidence that would not be admitted in natural science or in the affairs of common life, and absolutely rejecting what is inconsistent either with itself or with any truth generally acknowledged as such.

A *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism*, by the late Mr. Lecky, published in 1865, did much to promote a better appreciation among English readers of what reason has done to further the happiness of mankind by insensibly undermining the credence once given to various noxious superstitions. Lecky was not himself a deep or a logical thinker, and his dependence on authority is the reverse of rational; but his suave and conciliatory style did much to procure an entry for Buckle's ideas in circles which Buckle's extremely plain speaking had tended to alienate and alarm.

Lecky called himself a Christian, and no doubt he could claim the title with as good a right as many Broad Churchmen. The same may be said of the late Sir John Seeley, whose most celebrated work, *Ecce Homo,* also appeared in 1865. In form a survey of the life and work of Christ, the book is in reality a brilliant adaptation of the Gospel to modern Liberal politics, with nearly the whole supernatural element left out and Comte's religion of humanity dexterously put in its place. Some of the very elect were, perhaps not unwillingly, deceived, and Gladstone for one was so delighted with *Ecce Homo* and so satisfied with its orthodoxy that he afterwards made the author—who never put his name to it—Professor of Modern History at Cambridge. Lord Shaftesbury, on the other hand, said it was "vomited from the jaws of hell," which, if hell meant Positivism, was a rather strong way of stating a fact.

We have now reached a point of English history where the current of democratic opinion set going by the American War combines with the profounder current of religious liberalism to initiate and carry through the great legislative reforms by which the next five years are signalised.

Chapter XIII.

A STUDY IN EXPLOSIVES

The House of Commons which placed Lord Palmerston in power after the General Election of 1859 counted a nominal Liberal majority of fifty and a working Ministerial majority, on decisive party divisions, of less than twenty. Yet the veteran leader played the game with such skill that his administration is remembered as the most powerful and popular of the reign. The elections of July, 1865, gave him one last triumph, resulting as they did in a gain of twenty-five seats, counting fifty on a division. But the battle had been fought largely on the question of Parliamentary Reform, which he disliked, and on the merits of his Financial Minister, Gladstone, whose policy he viewed with extreme distrust. And what in the last resort told most decisively for Liberalism was the victory, in America, of the Northern Anti-slavery cause, to which Palmerston and Gladstone had been alike opposed. Not only had a democratic Republic, representing, as by this time was generally admitted, a most righteous cause, overcome at the cost of enormous sacrifices the most formidable rebellion known to history, but it had also treated the vanquished rebels with a magnanimity of which history offered no example.

Besides this general reaction on English opinion, the American War exercised other more indirect

effects on our domestic politics. It greatly strengthened a secret society known as the Fenian Brotherhood, formed for the purpose of making Ireland an independent State. Fenianism had begun in 1858, but attracted little attention until it enlisted American support. The constant stream of Irish emigration across the Atlantic would in any case have given Irish Nationalism a powerful body of sympathisers in the United States; and the experiences of war taught sympathy to assume a more aggressive shape. Many Irishmen had served in the Northern armies, where they acquired habits of military discipline; and some of these, when the restoration of peace threw them out of employment, made their way home to join the Fenian movement, which under their direction quickly developed into a formidable conspiracy against English rule. Their agitation had little success in promoting insurrection, but much success in drawing the attention of Great Britain to the chronic grievances of the sister island.

Of these grievances the most intelligible to English and Scotch opinion was the existence of a Protestant Establishment among a Catholic people, the fact that nearly all the religious endowments of the country went to relieve a small and comparatively wealthy minority from the duty of maintaining their religion at their own expense, as the Presbyterians and the Catholics were for the most part obliged to do. We have seen how that very moderate concession to religious justice known as the Appropriation Clause was successfully resisted in the House of Lords thirty years before, probably because it excited no enthusiasm

among the English people. But now, thanks no doubt to the great Freethought movement of the previous decade, English Dissenters and Scotch Presbyterians, formerly so bigoted in their hostility to Rome, were ready to join hands with Irish Catholics in demanding the destruction of Protestant ascendancy in Ireland. These religionists would have maintained with complete sincerity that modern science and modern criticism had left their faith stronger than ever. But it remained true that the effect of Rationalism had been to make sectarian differences count for less in the face of a common danger than the fundamental principles on which all Christians were agreed.

By a still more remarkable change of opinion, not only the English Nonconformists, but some High Churchmen also, had come to approve in principle of Irish Disestablishment. Foremost among these stood Gladstone, destined before long to make it the first article in the Liberal programme. The mere suspicion of such a possibility led to his rejection as her representative by the University of Oxford at the General Election of 1865; but on that occasion he received the support of John Keble, whose Assize Sermon had started the Tractarian Movement thirty-two years before, and who had so strongly resented Earl Grey's suppression of ten superfluous Irish bishoprics. More significantly still, in conversation with J. H. Newman about the much more drastic course anticipated from Gladstone, Keble whispered, "And is not that just?" We must suppose that the Tractarian leaders had advanced so far towards

Rome and away from Evangelicalism as to be favourably disposed to what would benefit Irish Catholics at the expense of Irish Evangelicals. And this was because Newman had taught them to look to Rome as a bulwark against the rising rationalism of the age.

The overthrow of the Slave Power and the abolition of slavery over the whole territory of the United States was followed within six months by a negro outbreak in Jamaica. So far as I know, these two events have never been brought into relation as cause and effect. But it seems not unlikely that there was some connection between them, for the immense importance given to the negro race by the war can hardly have failed to react on the coloured population of Jamaica, rousing them to a keener sense of the wrongs, real or imaginary, under which they suffered, and exciting hopes of redress, to be won, if necessary, by armed force. At any rate, on October 11th, 1865, a riot took place at Morant Bay. Eighteen white men were killed, thirty-two were wounded, and two houses were burned down. Edward John Eyre, governor of the island, at once proclaimed martial law, and launched his soldiers on the black population of the disaffected district, apparently with a free hand to commit whatever atrocities they pleased. For every white man killed more than twenty blacks were executed; for every white man wounded nearly twenty blacks, some of them women, were flogged. In one place the tails of the cat were twisted and knotted with wires. A thousand native houses were burned down. Owing

to the summary character of the proceedings, various persons were executed whose participation in the riot could not be proved. Indeed, some negroes were shot down merely because they ran away from the troops. On October 30th, by Eyre's own admission, the insurrection had been thoroughly crushed. Yet martial law with all its horrors was allowed to continue for nearly a fortnight longer. Finally a coloured man named Gordon, a member of the House of Representatives, accused without adequate proof of having instigated the insurrection, was judicially murdered by Eyre's express orders, at a time when the case might have been reserved for a regular trial without any danger to the English inhabitants of the island.

Lord Palmerston died while these events were in progress. Had he lived, he would probably have supported and rewarded Governor Eyre; nor by doing this would he have forfeited any popularity in the country—at least among the bulk of the upper and middle classes, who looked on black men as entitled to no more consideration than gorillas. But with his departure a new *régime* had already begun. Earl Russell, who succeeded to the Premiership, and Gladstone, who succeeded to the leadership of the House of Commons, whatever their private opinions about Eyre might be, were under the necessity of not alienating the Radical section of their party, in view of the Reform Bill they intended to introduce; nor was there any doubt about the attitude of that section on the present occasion. No sooner had detailed accounts of the atrocities perpetrated in

Jamaica begun to come in than a demand for immediate inquiry into the conduct of the responsible parties was raised by Radical politicians and journalists, supported by some of the most advanced thinkers of the age. Under pressure from this quarter Eyre was first suspended and then recalled, after a Commission sent out to collect information on the spot had brought to light the full extent of the enormities to which his sanction had been given.

An unofficial committee was formed for the purpose of having Eyre's guilt or innocence decided in the only regular manner—by putting him on his trial before an English Court of Justice. At its head stood John Stuart Mill, then at the zenith of his reputation and of his intellectual powers. His *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy,* published in the spring of 1865, had destroyed the authority of the reactionary Scotch metaphysician at a single blow, ruining at the same time the elaborate framework of sceptical sophistry by which Hamilton's Oxford disciple, Mansel, had tried to prop up the immoral dogmas of popular Christianity. He had also recently brought out a volume on Auguste Comte, giving a luminous summary of the great French thinker's system, and distinguishing with rare ability and impartiality between the truths and errors that it embodies. He had been returned to Parliament free of expense for Westminster, as of all reasoners the most competent to defend a wide extension of the suffrage against the redoubtable attacks of Robert Lowe, who, although himself on all other points a strong Liberal, had been adopted by the

Tories as their spokesman in the coming conflict on Parliamentary Reform.

Around Mill, as members of the Jamaica Committee, were grouped such men of light and leading in the spheres of thought and action as Darwin, Spencer, Wallace, Professor Huxley, Professor Goldwin Smith, Leslie Stephen, and Mr. Frederic Harrison. But, as usually happens in England, the intellectualists were by no means unanimous. Carlyle, who hated the negro race, gave the support of his irrelevantly picturesque rhetoric to Governor Eyre. Tennyson, Ruskin, Froude, Kingsley, Murchison, and Tyndall more or less openly took the same side. On the whole, the division of opinion as regarded the Jamaica question corresponded to the division on the American War, and, like that, indicated a conflict between two widely divergent ideals of society—more than that, between two different theories of the world ; for, as Herbert Spencer has observed, "the evolutionists, considering their small number, contributed a far larger proportion to the committee than any other class."[1]

So strong was the feeling in favour of Eyre that the Jamaica Committee failed in their efforts to put him on his trial, although Lord Chief Justice Cockburn charged the Old Bailey Grand Jury strongly against him. But, as Mill says, their efforts "gave an emphatic warning to those who might be tempted to similar guilt hereafter that, though they might escape the actual sentence of a criminal tribunal, they were not safe against being

[1] *Autobiography*, vol. ii., p. 143.

put to some trouble and expense in order to avoid it."[1]

In addition to the Fenian and Jamaican troubles, the new Government had to deal with a more immediate difficulty—the cattle plague, a destructive pestilence for which no remedy could be found except the slaughter of the diseased animals, and of those exposed to the risk of infection. Accordingly, when Parliament met a Bill was introduced prescribing this drastic remedy against the spread of the plague, and awarding an amount of compensation to the owners of the animals sacrificed suited rather to the interests and wishes of a land-owning oligarchy than to the just claims of the people at large, who were already suffering severely by a great rise in the price of meat. An absurdly high amount of compensation was assigned in the first Ministerial proposal, and two-thirds of the sum were to be provided by a local rate, one-third only being raised by a special tax on cattle. Thus the owners would be paid twice over—first by the legal indemnity, and then by the rise in prices. Against this iniquitous arrangement Mill protested in a speech which drew down on him the bitter hatred of the whole Tory party, and of not a few lukewarm Liberals into the bargain. His recommendations were not fully adopted, but they had the effect of reducing the proposed compensation by a considerable amount.

While the questions associated with Ireland,

[1] *Autobiography*, p. 299.

Jamaica, and the cattle plague greatly aggravated the difficulties and responsibilities of the Russell-Gladstone Government, they also made the tension between the respective representatives of advanced and of conservative opinion more acute, thus adding enormously to the virulence of party feeling on the issue in which all other differences were soon to be swallowed up—the issue of Parliamentary Reform. The newly-elected House of Commons included a much larger proportion of serious reformers than its predecessor, and the two chief Ministers were convinced advocates of popular suffrage. They brought in a Bill which would have given votes to 144,000 working men, together with a much larger number of middle-class householders. Mill, Bright, and the Radicals generally gave this exceedingly mild proposal a warm support; but the mere fact of their approval seemed to awaken a corresponding strength of opposition on the other side, recalling the passionate hostility evoked by the Reform Bill of 1831, and backed by arguments of much the same description, amounting to a general claim that our representative system was working admirably, and could not be improved.

This general objection to all change as such might not have counted for much, even with professed Conservatives, had it not been the expression of a more specific animosity towards the class whose partial enfranchisement was in contemplation. There was in 1866 among well-to-do people, more than at any time since the collapse of Chartism, a definite dread and hatred of the working classes, or at least of their Trade Unions,

which had been smouldering through the Palmerstonian period, and which, although partially alleviated by the experiences of the Cotton Famine, broke out again at the termination of the American War. In order to understand how this state of feeling came to exist we must go back to an earlier period of English industrial history; but the digression will not detain us long.

Previous to 1824 combinations to procure an increase of wages were more or less forbidden by law and punished as crimes. Among other consequences of the great Liberal movement begun soon after the accession of George IV., complete freedom of contract was obtained in that year, chiefly through the efforts of two Radicals, Francis Place and Joseph Hume. This concession led to an epidemic of strikes, frequently accompanied by rioting and outrage, with the result that in 1825 a new Bill was passed "prohibiting any person doing any act or making any threat to induce any manufacturer to alter the rules of his factory, or any workman to accept or leave any employment, or to join any club";[1] and this law continued in force for more than forty years. Nevertheless, the operatives continued to fight for an increase of wages or for shorter hours, with varying degrees of success, by means of strikes, which their Trade Unions proved highly efficacious instruments for carrying through. The masters retorted by lock-outs—that is to say, by refusing to employ men who, though consenting to work for the usual wages, either belonged to Trade Unions or were suspected

[1] Walpole, *History of England,* vol. ii., p. 181.

of contributing to the support of strikes. This sort of civil war raged with particular virulence after the commercial crisis of 1857, and led to a great pitched battle between employers and employed in the building trade, lasting from November, 1858, to February, 1860. On that occasion neither side succeeded in carrying its point, but the conflict left Trade Unionism in a stronger position than before.[1]

At that time "society," and indeed the educated classes generally, looked on strikes not only as a most disagreeable interruption to business, but also as a revolt against the natural law of supply and demand. They took this view on trust from the leading political economists, all of whom, including J. S. Mill, taught the existence of something that they called the Wages Fund—that is, "a sum of wealth unconditionally devoted to the wages of labour," and limited, "at any given moment, to a predetermined amount.....so that, the sum to be divided being fixed, the wages of each depend solely on the number of participants." Thus strikes could not possibly increase wages or prevent them from falling, although indirectly they might, and actually did, lower wages by diminishing the fund whence they were paid.[2]

By a singular inadvertence the economists long failed to observe that the employer's profits constituted an additional fund on which it was possible for his men to encroach to any extent short of what would leave him without a motive for carrying on

[1] Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, pp. 213–14.

[2] Mill, *Dissertations and Discussions*, vol. iv., pp. 43 *sqq.*

the business—a fact first pointed out by W. T. Thornton in 1869, and immediately accepted as true by Mill.

Working men naturally set little store on a science whose teachings were contradicted by experience before they were corrected by theory. One of the new members of Parliament, Thomas Hughes, the author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays,* who had been elected in the labour interest, speaking in the debate on the second reading of Gladstone's Reform Bill, vainly urged on his hearers the expediency of giving working men a share in the national representation, precisely because their views on the price of labour and the laws of supply and demand differed so widely from the middle and upper-class theory. The only effect of his arguments was to send votes over to the other side.

On the occasion of Lord Russell's previous abortive Reform Bills no enthusiasm had been shown for them by the unenfranchised masses, nor any anger when they failed; and this popular indifference furnished Conservatives on both sides of the House with a standing argument in favour of letting the subject sleep. In fact, the wage-earners had come to believe that their condition could be much more effectively bettered by means of Trade Unionism than by such a remote and feeble share in legislation as a tenth or so of the whole voting power would bestow. But the Parliamentary debates of 1866 totally changed their views. What was seen to be withheld with such alarm seemed to be worth demanding with equal passion on the part of those to whom it was denied;

and the more so as indications were not wanting of a desire to destroy the Trade Unions by Act of Parliament, and to deal with resistance to such a measure by suspending the Habeas Corpus Act, as in Ireland, or by proclaiming martial law, as in Jamaica.

I have said that the Parliament of 1865 included many more sincere reformers than its predecessor. But they numbered altogether less than half the whole House ; so that by allying themselves with every section of discontented Liberalism in turn the Tory Opposition at last succeeded in wrecking Gladstone's very moderate Bill. The Liberal Ministry at once resigned, and Disraeli (with Lord Derby as his nominal chief) took office for the third time, and retained it two years and a half by faithfully copying that policy of Conservative surrender on which he had poured such fierce sarcasm when Sir Robert Peel inaugurated it less than a quarter of a century before, without Peel's justification that his change of policy was necessary for the safety of the country.

As Leader of the House of Commons Gladstone had failed utterly ; but his fall made him a popular hero, and his name became a rallying cry for the new enthusiasm on behalf of Reform which had spread from the North to London. He had told the opponents of his Bill that the working men were their own flesh and blood ; and the masses do not forget such words. Before the formation of a new Government had been officially announced crowds of working men were parading the streets of London with unmistakable indications of the

side on which their sympathies were enlisted. Three weeks later it was announced that a great Reform demonstration would be held in Hyde Park. Contrary to the advice of their Home Secretary, the Government closed the park gates against the meeting. On this the responsible leaders withdrew, leaving behind them, however, a disorderly crowd, who broke down the park railings, spread over the enclosure, and did much mischief to the flowers and shrubs. This rather childish exhibition proved no less effective for its purpose than the terrible riots at Bristol had been a generation before. On this occasion much more serious consequences might have happened, as a body called the Reform League summoned another meeting to be held in the park a few days afterwards, at a time when troops were being kept in readiness to prevent it. Mill, who could hardly have been mistaken on the subject, tells us that the League were only dissuaded from carrying out their intention by his remonstrances—a fact which all the historians of the period but one have passed over in silence.[1]

During the subsequent autumn and winter the working men adopted a more efficacious and less dangerous method of showing their opinions, by marching through the streets of London in long processions, among which those organised by the Trade Unions made the most conspicuous figure. The men who walked in these processions presented such a well-to-do appearance that the spectators who watched them from the club windows asked

[1] Mill's *Autobiography,* pp. 190–1. Herbert Paul, *Modern England,* vol. iii., p. 55.

one another in surprise, Was it possible these people could not afford to live in a ten-pound house? Such may, in fact, have been their rental; but as a class their interests obviously led them to combine with the householders who paid less rather than with those who paid more than that modest sum.

Payment of a seven-pound rental had been the qualification for exercising the borough franchise fixed by Gladstone's Bill, and an amendment proposing to substitute a rating for a rental value was what finally wrecked it in Committee. The object in view was merely to diminish the number of new electors, as houses are habitually rated at a figure below their letting value. But the distinction between a rating and a rental franchise acquired a new significance when Disraeli introduced a Reform Bill of his own in the Session of 1867. After a variety of abortive schemes presented and withdrawn for the sole purpose of keeping his party in office, the Tory leader proposed a measure the most important provision of which gave the borough franchise to all householders rated for the relief of the poor. Now, as regarded the payment of rates there was no uniform rule in English boroughs as to whether it should be made by the householder or by his landlord. It was a question determined in each instance by the majority of the ratepayers themselves. The more general arrangement was that the landlord should pay, although, of course, he indemnified himself by raising the rent. In that case the tenant was called a compound householder. But there were certain boroughs where this arrangement did not exist, and there a rating franchise would have meant

Household Suffrage pure and simple. It was a piece of the grossest political hypocrisy to pretend, as Disraeli did, that such an accident determined a man's fitness or the contrary to join in the choice of a Parliamentary representative. Finally, to the great astonishment of both parties, the Tory leader found his way out of this ridiculous position by accepting the proposal of a Liberal member abolishing the compound householder, and directing that none but occupiers should be rated for the relief of the poor within the limit of Parliamentary boroughs. This amounted to unqualified Household Suffrage, which Disraeli had declared he would never accept. In what way the compound householder would become better fitted for the exercise of his new privilege by being subjected to the gratuitous inconvenience of paying his rates in person instead of by proxy did not appear. Nor, in fact, was he destined to benefit long by that magical operation. Two years subsequently the old system of compounding was quietly reinstated, without depriving the compounder of his vote.

Soon after passing his Bill, or rather the Bill forced on him by the Liberal Opposition, Disraeli described himself in a public speech as having educated the Conservative party to believe in democratic reform. Finding that the assertion provoked some murmurs, he first altered it into "we"—that is, Lord Derby and himself—"were educating the Conservative party," and finally into "the Conservative party were educating the country." In each version the claim can only be described as an impudent falsehood. So far from being educated by the Conservative party, the

country taught them, in unmistakable accents, that they must yield to its demands without delay. Lord Derby, who called Household Suffrage "a leap in the dark," never pretended to be convinced, still less to convince others, of its expediency. As for Disraeli himself, the only educator we can compare him to is the Faliscan schoolmaster of early Roman history who surrendered his young charges to Camillus. Three Secretaries of State, who may be taken as fairly representing what the party really thought, resigned rather than agree to a much more limited franchise than that ultimately accepted. One of them, the future Lord Salisbury, was credited with an article in the *Quarterly Review,* passionately denouncing what it called the Conservative surrender. As for the rank and file, they simply yielded to the obligations of party discipline and to the dread of a dissolution in case they refused to follow their chief.

If Disraeli expected his party to gain by the Tory Reform Bill, he was grievously mistaken. Their domestic policy suffered a crushing defeat on an appeal to the people in 1868; their foreign policy a defeat still more crushing in 1880. His dream of restoring the royal authority has not been fulfilled; his friends of the territorial aristocracy have yielded to considerable inroads on their dignities and proprietary rights; an entire branch of the Anglican Establishment has been lopped off, and its privileges as against Dissent have been sensibly curtailed. Tory statesmen, beginning with himself, have, it is true, enjoyed extensive terms of office; but this, which would have come

to pass under any suffrage, has been due to the mistakes and divisions of their opponents far more than to any popular preference for themselves; while any attempt to revive old Tory principles has met with speedy discomfiture on an appeal to the democratic vote. Even the office for whose tenure they held no sacrifice too great has had to be shared with dissentient Liberals, and the coalitions which, according to Disraeli, England does not love have been used to strengthen the position of those on whom the mantle of this modern Hebrew prophet has fallen.

Before the working classes could enter into possession of their new privileges the organisations that had led them to victory found their very existence put in peril. An outrage perpetrated at Sheffield in October, 1866, by order of a Trade Union, coming as it did after a long series of similar atrocities, excited public opinion to fresh manifestations of hostility against the system of which they were held to be the inevitable result, and led to the appointment of a Royal Commission for the investigation of the whole subject. Under promise of impunity certain witnesses were induced to come forward and give a circumstantial narrative of the crimes committed by themselves or at their instigation in order to compel non-unionist workmen "to join the Union or to punish them for their refusal." The means of coercion ranged from putting needles into the brick-makers' clay for the purpose of injuring their hands to blowing up their houses with gunpowder or shooting them dead. Sheffield had the worst record for outrages;

but Manchester and other places were not far behind.[1] Only a small minority of Trade Unions were implicated in these crimes; but the public indignation provoked by their disclosure extended itself to Unionism in general, and led the employers to hope for its abolition.

Meanwhile, the prosecution of a defaulting Trade Union treasurer had elicited an important legal decision from the Court of Queen's Bench. It appeared that the society which sought redress had no claim to protection against the embezzlement of its funds, the reason given being that its objects, if not actually criminal, were yet so far in restraint of trade as to render it an illegal association.[2] The same judgment applied equally to all the Trade Unions in the country, classing them with illegal associations, and placing their funds—which, in the aggregate, amounted to a quarter of a million—at the mercy of their dishonest employees.[3]

Fortunately for their cause, the Trade Unions had enlisted the support of the English Positivists, a small band of high-minded, able, and eloquent thinkers, who had recently formed themselves into a society for the propagation of Auguste Comte's teaching in England. Unlike Mill, G. H. Lewes, and Harriet Martineau, these new disciples did not stop short at the intellectual side of Positivism, but dwelt also and more particularly on its religious and ethical aspects. Without being in any way affected by Comte's theories, or indeed by French influences of any kind, Trade Unionism appealed to

[1] Molesworth, *History of England,* vol. iii., pp. 370–75.
[2] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism,* p. 245.
[3] *Ibid.,* p. 246.

these men as a practical and efficacious protest against the anarchic individualism of the orthodox political economy, which Comte also regarded with extreme disfavour. While joining in the general condemnation of the Sheffield outrages, two members of the Positivist Society, Professor Beesly and Dr. Richard Congreve, had not hesitated to brave the public opinion of the upper classes by placing them in the same category of crimes with the atrocities perpetrated by Governor Eyre and his confederates in Jamaica. Another Positivist, Mr. Frederic Harrison, author of the article on "Neo-Christianity," in the *Westminster Review,* which first revealed the full meaning and significance of *Essays and Reviews*, had so thoroughly won the confidence of the Unionist leaders that they obtained his appointment to a place on the Royal Commission for inquiring into the facts of Trade Unionism. While holding that position he, in conjunction with Thomas Hughes, already mentioned as the Parliamentary champion of labour, conducted the Trade Union case against its opponents. Without being able to persuade the majority of the Commissioners to adopt their view in its entirety, they succeeded in dissipating some prejudices against the Unions; while their Minority Report, described as "a complete charter of Trade-Union liberty," "became for seven years the political programme of the Trade Unionists."[1] "It advocated the removal of all special legislation relating to labour contracts, on the principle, first, that no act should be illegal if committed by a

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism,* p. 255.

workman unless it was equally illegal if committed by any other person; and, secondly, that no act by a combination of men should be regarded as criminal if it would not have been criminal in a single person."[1]

With a view to getting this programme passed into law, Mr. Harrison strongly urged on the newly-enfranchised working men the importance of registering themselves as voters and pledging candidates to support their interests in Parliament. We shall see hereafter what were the fruits of this agitation. In the meantime it will be instructive to note a good effect of the Reform Act independent of any actual change in the labour laws. By conferring political equality on the working men it raised them in the estimation of the masters, and enabled the two to sit side by side on boards of conciliation. "The employers used to say that it would degrade them to sit at the same board with their workmen; but it is noticeable that directly the political independence of the latter was recognised, as soon as he *(sic)* possessed the franchise, these objections began to disappear."[2]

English public opinion—or at least the public opinion of the governing classes—habitually yields to violence what it will not yield to reason. The raid on Hyde Park had won Reform; the Sheffield murders had drawn attention to the claims of labour; Fenian outrages were now to procure a certain measure of redress for the wrongs of Ireland. In September, 1867, two Fenians on their way to prison in Manchester were rescued by a band of

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 254.
[2] Arnold Toynbee, *The Industrial Revolution*, p. 149.

armed men, and the police sergeant who had charge of the van conveying them was shot dead —an offence for which the murderer himself and two others were hanged. Three weeks after their execution an attempt was made to rescue two other Fenians from Clerkenwell by blowing up the prison wall with gunpowder. The attempt failed, but twelve persons were killed and a hundred and twenty others injured by the explosion. Disraeli, who since February, 1868, had become in name as well as in reality Prime Minister, replied by a fresh suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in Ireland, and by an Irish Reform Bill giving the franchise to only half as many electors in proportion to the population as in England. Then his great rival seized the opportunity to rally the whole Liberal party, which alike in office and opposition had broken from his lead on the Reform question, round the standard of religious equality. Before the end of March Gladstone began his campaign against the Irish Church, and on the morning of May 1st he carried a resolution advising its disestablishment and disendowment by a majority of 65. Thirty-one years earlier the far milder proposals known as the Appropriation Clause had been carried by a majority of only 33.[1] This significant advance, as I have already taken occasion to point out, is an index of the ground gained by rationalism in the interval. And, as if to supply a further confirmation of the same momentous change, an Act for the abolition of compulsory Church rates was carried in the same Session by

[1] Spencer Walpole, *History of England,* vol. iv., p. 21.

the same statesman, who had begun life as a champion of ecclesiastical privilege.

Nor was this only a Parliamentary, a political, or a Nonconformist victory. The approaching fall of the Irish Establishment was welcomed with acclamation by the intellectual and literary classes, who also disdainfully rejected the old Whig idea, now once more put forward, of concurrent endowment—that is, the distribution of the confiscated revenues among the three Irish Churches in proportion to their numerical strength. In their opinion the time had gone by for subsidising religious teaching in any form, for that would be merely building up what at no distant period would have to be pulled down again.

It only remained to ascertain by an appeal to the country what the newly-enfranchised classes thought on the subject. Their answer came in figures whose meaning could not be doubted. Household Suffrage in the English boroughs returned a great Liberal majority. Scotland, the best educated part of the United Kingdom, returned a Liberal majority of five to one. The Liberal majority in the whole House was 120. Mill's defeat at Westminster nearly consoled the Tories for this tremendous disaster. But the great philosopher's work was done. During his brief Parliamentary career Mill had done England a service not easily matched among the achievements of private members. In a single speech of remarkable eloquence he convinced Gladstone, and eventually Gladstone's pupil Stafford Northcote, that a provision should be made for paying off the National Debt while our resources are still available for the

purpose. England's prosperity depends on the productivity of her coalfields, and it is certain that these will be exhausted within a measurable period of time. It is, therefore, desirable to clear off our present liabilities before that fatal moment arrives. There may be stronger arguments for establishing a Sinking Fund than this; but none have so stimulated the imagination of statesmen as Mill's appeal on behalf of posterity, urged with impressive dignity on the House of Commons more than forty years ago. Immediately on the delivery of his speech a considerable sum was set aside for the reduction of the Debt; and from the second year after his death, which took place in 1873, a regular provision for its progressive extinction has formed part of our financial system.

Chapter XIV.

TRANSFERS OF POWER

When the verdict of the new constituencies had been declared, Disraeli set the excellent example of resigning before Parliament met, and Gladstone was charged for the first time with the formation of a Government. His Ministry contained an exceptionally large proportion of untitled ability, thus indicating the class whence the agents of the new Sovereign were likely more and more to be chosen. The new Administration brought with it a mandate for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church; and to this work the Session of 1869 was principally devoted.

Of the funds set free by disendowment too large a proportion found its way into the pockets of persons whose claims could not compare with those of the peasantry, by whose labour the amount of wealth disposable had been originally created. If English Church property should ever be resumed by the community, which is its rightful heir, we may hope that such jobbery will be avoided, and that the sum accruing after all vested interests have been equitably, and no more than equitably, provided for will be used to pay off a part of the National Debt, setting free a corresponding amount of the revenue to meet whatever increased expenditure the defence of the country or the furtherance of its happiness may demand.

It need hardly be mentioned that Irish discontent did not disappear, any more than after Catholic Emancipation, because another instalment of justice had been conceded; nor, indeed, was it desirable that the wrongs still unredressed should be so easily condoned. Nevertheless, the survivors of that period have no reason to regret the policy they then pursued. Had the battle against privilege been fought on some less intelligible issue, the whole fabric of injustice might have remained intact until the agitation for Irish self-government swelled to an irresistible height. In the opinion of many political thinkers, this would have been no misfortune; but, without entering on the general merits of the radical solution they favour, it should suffice to recall that an independent Irish Parliament, legislating under priestly dictation, would probably have begun its work by handing over the spoils of the Protestant Establishment to the Bishops and clergy of the Roman Church, with little or no regard to the vested interests of their former possessors. And, in the opinion of all who are opposed on principle to ecclesiastical endowments, such a disposition would have been far more objectionable than the arrangements actually made, however open to criticism these may be.

To the mass of the Irish people Protestant ascendancy was a less terrible grievance than the conditions of land tenure. Farms, as a rule, were let on yearly tenancies; improvements were habitually made by the tenants and habitually confiscated by the landlords; even tenants who paid their rent regularly were liable to be evicted and

replaced by others who undertook to pay a higher rent. In Ulster alone tenant farmers possessed, by the custom of the country, a right of property in the goodwill of their holdings, which, when the land was relet, they could sell for a substantial sum to the new occupier; but this custom was not recognised by law.

A Bill, introduced in February, 1870, proposed to deal with these grievances by giving the Ulster custom force of law, by extending it to the whole of Ireland, and by providing that the tenant, in case of eviction, should be compensated for improvements made by him, the insertion of any proviso to the contrary in leases being forbidden. Bright as a private member, and Mill in a pamphlet entitled *England and Ireland* (1868), had proposed the partial buying out of the landlords, and the sale of their estates on easy terms to the occupiers, as the most satisfactory solution of the land question. Bright was now a Cabinet Minister; and in deference to his authority clauses were introduced into the Irish Land Bill directing advances of public money to be made for the purpose of enabling tenants to buy their holdings in cases where the landlords were willing to sell. Gladstone, who framed and conducted the measure, had no belief in peasant proprietors, and Bright was disabled by illness from pushing his favourite scheme; nor did the purchase clauses prove adequate to carry it out. It is, however, interesting to observe that two such men as Mill and Bright, one of them representing the Benthamite school of philosophy and the other the Manchester school of politics, should have abandoned the traditions of *laissez-*

faire in favour of State intervention for the purpose of giving the poor advantages which, under a system of free competition and free contract, they had been unable to secure.

The same Session that saw the first considerable attempt to interfere with economic freedom in reference to Irish land tenure saw also a much more sweeping interference with the economic laws of supply and demand in their relation to the elementary education of the English people. It will be remembered that State aid to education first began after the Reform Act of 1832, and that it then took the form of money grants to voluntary associations whose interest in the subject was chiefly religious. Under this system the number of schools built, and of children attending them, steadily increased. But it fell far short of the whole number wanted; and the quality of the instruction given was not satisfactory. With a view to its improvement, Robert Lowe, who practically controlled the Education Department from 1859 to 1864, introduced what was called the system of payment by results—that is to say, the amount of money granted to the State-aided schools was made to depend on the number of children whose proficiency in the elementary subjects suited to their age or standing was such as to satisfy the Government inspectors.

Lowe's standards only took secular knowledge into account; and this sort of testing gave great offence to the clerical school managers, whose interest did not lie with the three R's, but with a fourth R—namely, religion, which was not allowed

to count for anything in the qualifying examinations. Under the lead of Lord Robert Cecil, afterwards so famous as Lord Salisbury, the Parliamentary obscurantists drove Lowe from office, not much, as would seem, to the displeasure of his colleagues, on whom he revenged himself by wrecking their Reform Bill in 1866. On the passing of Household Suffrage he uttered the famous apophthegm, "We must educate our masters." And now, as Chancellor of the Exchequer in Gladstone's Ministry, he belonged to a Government with an unrivalled opportunity for redeeming that obligation.[1]

They did not show themselves altogether equal to the situation. W. E. Forster, the Minister charged with preparing the new Education Bill, was not a statesman of high intellect or wide views. But as an educational enthusiast, not belonging to any religious denomination, he had the advantage of most of his colleagues, and was in some ways a more advanced reformer than the Prime Minister himself. His Bill marked a considerable improvement on the existing system. It provided that the denominational schools in receipt of State aid should henceforth be subject to undenominational inspection, and that no child who attended such schools should be forced to receive religious instruction of which its parents disapproved. This

[1] Lowe had begun life as an Oxford coach, but he had no practical knowledge of elementary teaching, and his system of payment by results exercised a most baneful influence on the schools, where it greatly stimulated cramming, and led to the treatment of children as machines for obtaining increased grants. This, however, does not alter the fact that he fell on the question of religious *versus* secular education.

provision, known as the Conscience Clause, had been first proposed by the Education Department in 1853; but, owing to the violent resistance of the Church managers, had not been insisted on until 1864. It was now re-enacted under a more stringent form, and definitely accepted in principle by the bigots who had fought against it so long. Where no efficient schools existed, Boards were to be created with power to levy rates "either to assist voluntary schools or to establish schools of their own."[1] And, subject of course to a Conscience Clause, they were free to settle what form of religious instruction should be followed, or even to order that none should be given. In addition to what they drew from the rates, the new schools were to receive a grant from the Consolidated Fund, and the children attending them were to pay a small fee. Finally, the Boards might enforce the attendance of all children whose education was not otherwise provided for, but they were not bound to enforce it. Forster himself would have preferred absolute compulsion; but he had the majority of the Cabinet against him.[2]

It will be seen that the Bill, as at first framed, while in some ways restricting the evils of the sectarian system, in other ways perpetuated and extended them. The outrageous provision enabling the School Boards to have whatever religion they chose taught at the public expense was, indeed, subsequently withdrawn, and replaced by the famous Cowper-Temple clause, directing that in rate-supported schools "no catechism or religious

[1] Sir H. Craik, *The State in its Relation to Education,* p. 92.
[2] H. Paul, *Modern England,* vol. iii., p. 216.

formulary distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught";[1] while the Boards themselves, instead of being appointed by the vestries or other local bodies, as had been originally provided, were handed over to direct popular election. On the other hand, the denominational schools, which in practice were mostly Church schools, continued to be subsidised by the Exchequer, and the subsidy was even raised from one-third to one-half of the total cost; besides which, "by the twenty-fifth clause, School Boards were enabled to pay in denominational schools the fees of parents who, though not paupers, were unable to pay them."[2] "Training schools were left mostly in the hands of the sects, so that almost the only teachers to be procured by the model unsectarian schools were persons brought up in the lines of active sectarianism."[3]

What made the new lease of life given to the old system not only a theoretical injustice, but also a great practical mischief, was the proved inefficiency of the denominational schools. This had been brought to light by the requirements of Lowe's Revised Code, with its system of payment by results. To pass in its highest standard "a child must be able to read with fluency and expression, to write a short letter, and to work rule-of-three sums and fractions." Now, "of the two million children on the school registers in 1872 only 8,819 passed without failure in the three

[1] Elementary Education Act, 32 and 34 Vic., clause 14.

[2] Spencer Walpole, *History of Twenty-five Years,* vol. ii., p. 410.

[3] John Morley, *The Struggle for National Education,* p. 15.

subjects."[1] And this highest standard, that so few could succeed in, was "below the lowest Saxon, Prussian, or Swiss standard, even for the country schools." Where we had never passed 20,000 children in one year, Prussia, with a smaller population, passed nineteen times that number every year.[2]

Such, according to Mr. Morley, was "the consequence of entrusting public money.....to little knots of managers" engrossed in the interests of "their sect and its dogmas and shibboleths."[3]

The inspectors of training schools for teachers had to report a similar range of deficiencies higher up in the educational scale. The pupils acquitted themselves creditably in Holy Scripture, but fell below the mark in English grammar, mental arithmetic, and penmanship. The object was to make them "not only religious people, but sound Church people"; to impress them with the idea that "'there is no more effective way of benefiting their fellow-creatures than by giving them a sound education in the theology of the Church of England.'"[4]

At no time would the pretensions of the Church of England to control popular education have been tolerated by Dissenting or Secularist Liberals. Least of all could they be tolerated at a time when the most active and influential section of the Church's members were working, without disguise, to remodel her doctrines on Roman Catholic lines,

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 24–25.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 25 (quoting Mundella).
[3] *Ibid*, p. 24.
[4] *Ibid*, pp. 35–37.

exalting the pretensions of the priesthood, introducing the practice of private confession, and exhibiting sacramentalism as the very essence of religion. Their efforts were connected by an unbroken continuity of teaching with the Tractarian and Puseyite movement, on which they had made no essential advance. But they had given it a new and telling advertisement by appearing at the altar in garments of wonderful cut and colour, known as vestments, supposed to have the sanction of ancient ecclesiastical practice, but of very doubtful legality or good taste when donned by ministers of the reformed Anglican communion, and flaunted before congregations assembled to worship in the manner prescribed by the rubrics of the reformed Anglican Establishment. Some of these Ritualists, as they were called, openly advocated reunion with Rome; others went over to her communion; all were, not without reason, popularly regarded as the most efficacious propagandists of her faith. Now, it so happened that, at the very time when the Education Bill was under discussion, an Ecumenical Council, assembled for the purpose, was preparing to sanction by its decrees the Pope's claim to infallibility in questions of faith and morals—a claim which, as understood at the time, would give dogmatic authority to a protest against religious toleration recently issued by the reigning Pontiff, Pius IX.

But for the personal preferences of Gladstone and Forster, a much more satisfactory settlement of the education question might well have been carried in the most Liberal House of Commons the nineteenth century was destined to see; and

had it been rejected by the Lords—which seemed unlikely—an appeal to the constituencies would have sent the same majority back in triumph to Westminster. Parliament showed its true temper plainly enough, not only by the disestablishment of the Irish Church, but also, and even more, by an Act enabling atheists to give evidence on their affirmation in courts of law, passed the same year, and by the abolition of religious tests at Oxford and Cambridge, passed in 1871. It had been asserted with confidence not many years before that English parents wished university education to remain exclusively in the hands of the clergy. Experience has shown that they are perfectly willing to entrust both their sons and daughters to lay tuition. And their supposed prejudice against secular elementary education is, to all appearances, an equally baseless assumption.

While the Gladstonian Government were alienating the most advanced section of their majority within and without Parliament, both the Government and the majority of the House of Commons were making enemies of the working men, to whom they owed their very existence. "At the beginning of 1869 Mr. Frederic Harrison had drafted a comprehensive Bill embodying all the legislative proposals of his minority report. This was introduced by Messrs. Hughes and Mundella; and, although its provisions were received with denunciations by the employers, it gained some support among the newly-elected members, and was strongly backed outside the House. The Liberal Government of that day and nearly all the members of the House

of Commons were still covertly hostile to the principle of Trade Unionism, and every attempt was made to burke the measure. But the Junta [a little band of leading Trade Union officials who acted as a Cabinet for the whole movement] were determined to make felt their new political power. From every part of the country pressure was put upon members of Parliament. A great demonstration of workmen was held at Exeter Hall, at which Messrs. Mundella and Hughes declared their intention of forcing the House and the Ministry to vote upon the hated measure. Finding evasion no longer possible, the Government abandoned its attitude of hostility, and agreed to a formal second reading upon the understanding that the Cabinet would next year bring in a Bill of its own. A provisional measure, giving temporary protection to Trade Union funds, was accordingly hurried through Parliament at the end of the session, pending the introduction of a complete Bill."[1]

Two years passed before the appearance of the promised Bill, and then it proved highly unsatisfactory. Complete legal recognition was, indeed, granted to the Unions ; but their means of action were seriously hampered. A series of judicial decisions, by which even peaceful picketing was made a crime, were re-enacted in a codified form, thus becoming "more uniformly effectual."[2] As a concession to the Unionists, this penalising provision was made into a separate Bill ; but it passed as such, and an amendment introduced by the Lords made the prohibition of peaceful picketing

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, pp. 258–59.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 263.

even more stringent, "watching and besetting by a single individual being made as criminal as watching and besetting" by a multitude.[1] Thus "almost any action taken by Trade Unionists to induce a man not to accept employment at a struck shop resulted, under the new Act, in imprisonment with hard labour."[2] Yet "Mr. Gladstone refused, in 1872, to admit that there was any necessity for further legislation, and utterly declined to take the matter up; and during that session" no member could be found "willing to introduce a Bill for the repeal of" the obnoxious law.[3]

In order to understand the reactionary attitude of even Liberal politicians towards the claims of working men we must once more turn our attention to Continental affairs.

Bismarck's high-handed intervention in Schleswig-Holstein, related in a former chapter, was merely a first step towards the unification of Germany under Prussian leadership. His next step was the expulsion of Austria from the German Confederation. To secure the neutrality of France, illusory promises of territorial aggrandisement were dangled before the eyes of her Emperor, whose faculties, never very considerable, had for some time past been undermined by disease and fatigue. Italy gave her alliance in exchange for the prospective cession of Venetia, which, with Rome, was alone wanting to complete her independence and unity. A campaign of a few days in Bohemia (June–July, 1866) laid the Hapsburg

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 266. [2] P. 268.
[3] Pp. 269–70.

monarchy prostrate at the feet of its rival; and, but for French jealousy, the great Prussian statesman's dream might have been at once realised. For the moment North Germany alone was permitted to unite in a new Confederation, to which, however, the South German States were bound by secret treaties of alliance in the event of a foreign war.

Napoleon III. came out of the crisis with a loss of prestige still further aggravated by the failure of his feeble attempts to obtain some of the promised compensation, which in this instance would have been no better than blackmail. Nor did his discomfitures end here. One of his schemes for giving France a sort of hegemony among the Latin races had been to set up an empire in Mexico under a creature of his own, the Austrian Archduke Maximilian. But the Mexicans did not want an Emperor; and the ruler thrust upon them could only be maintained by a French army of occupation. On the overthrow of the Southern Confederacy this army had to be withdrawn, as a French opposition speaker expressed it, "before an imperious gesture of the United States." Under pressure from his Clericalist supporters, whom also perhaps he felt bound in honour not to abandon, Maximilian kept up a hopeless struggle with the Republican forces for a year longer. In June, 1867, he fell into the hands of President Juarez, who, in accordance with the usual Spanish custom—a custom followed by Maximilian himself when in power—had him shot as a disturber of the peace. Had their positions been reversed, the Austrian filibuster would probably have inflicted the same fate on the Mexican patriot without offending European prejudices.

By a singular combination of misfortunes, a little before the tragedy of Queretaro was announced the French Emperor had seen himself defeated in a paltry scheme of annexation. By a private bargain with its titular sovereign, the King of Holland, he had hoped to possess himself of the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg, a detached fragment of the old Germanic Confederation, deriving importance only from the great fortress with which its little capital used to be crowned. Unfortunately, Prussia still kept the fortress garrisoned with her troops, and, on hearing of the bargain made behind her back, refused to let it pass into the hands of a rival Power. War seemed imminent, but was temporarily averted, chiefly through the exertions of Lord Stanley, the English Conservative Foreign Minister, who assembled a European Conference in London and persuaded both parties to submit their claims to its decision. It was agreed that the fortress should be demolished, and that the Grand Duchy should be constituted as a neutral and independent territory. But the real diplomatic victory remained with the conquerors of Sadowa, whose breechloaders Napoleon III. was evidently afraid to face.

In the autumn of the same year, 1867, Garibaldi, with the almost undisguised approval and support of the Italian Government, led his volunteers to an attack on Rome, whence the French garrison had been withdrawn some years previously on an understanding that Italy was to suspend her designs for its annexation, at least during the lifetime of the reigning Pope. Garibaldi was within reach of success when the arrival of a French force,

dispatched, as is believed, against the Emperor's will, arrested him on the field of Mentana. De Failly, the French commander, an incompetent Court favourite, discredited his piteous victory by adding to its announcement a phrase destined to everlasting infamy: "The chassepots have done wonders." By a second blunder this was published in the *Moniteur*, evidently as a petty defiance to Prussia, for the chassepot was a newly-invented breechloader with which the French army was being rapidly supplied in view of a future war for the conquest of the Rhine frontier.

As the power and prestige of the Empire declined the strength and confidence of its domestic enemies increased. In the Press, in the Legislature, even in the law courts, the attacks of the Liberal Opposition on the Government grew more frequent and fearless, its home and foreign policy equally giving occasion for damaging criticism, sometimes conveyed in a style of high literary finish. At length, in 1869, the elections to the Corps Legislatif, although they still left the Bonapartists in a great majority, showed a gain of so many seats by the united sections of Liberal opinion as to permit no doubt that, in the absence of official pressure on the electors, their verdict would have been cast for constitutional freedom, as under Louis Philippe—a result which may perhaps be partly credited to the parallel democratic movement across the Channel. Personally, the Emperor rather welcomed such a change, tending, as it did, to lighten the overwhelming burden of his responsibilities, and a Liberal Cabinet was installed in power with his full acquiescence. Many, however, among his

old supporters looked on the new departure with alarm, and set their hopes on a successful war with Prussia, leading to a substantial increase of French territory, as the only chance of preserving the dynasty when Napoleon, whose health was rapidly failing, should be gone.

In these circumstances Bismarck adopted a course which has been severely censured for its apparent unscrupulousness, but for which something may be said even on grounds of the highest political morality. Seeing that the dominant party in France—and, indeed, any party likely to take its place should there be a revolution—might be expected to make war, whenever it suited their convenience, for the disruption and spoliation of Germany, he determined to promote a conflict between the two countries at a time when Germany still stood far better prepared for it than her hereditary enemy. For this purpose, early in 1870 he secretly put forward a young Prince of the Hohenzollern family as a candidate for the Spanish throne, which had remained vacant ever since the overthrow of the Bourbon dynasty by a military revolution in September, 1868. Prim, the author of the revolution, and still practically dictator of Spain, accepted the German nominee, and would have imposed his choice on the Cortes had not the rulers of France, in complete accordance with Bismarck's previsions, intervened to forbid the Hohenzollern candidature immediately on its promulgation in July. Had the direct annexation of Spain to Prussia been contemplated, the language of the Emperor's representatives could not have been more violent. In point of fact, there neither

was nor could be any foundation for the affected alarm, the alliances of modern States not being determined by the family connections of their sovereigns; and Spain, of all European States, having the least motive for allying herself with a Protestant Power against Catholic France. The real grievance, if any, seems to have been that Spain, under a Liberal Government, would not have lent herself to the designs of the clerical party at the Tuileries. If we may trust a report current at the time, their plan was to replace the French expeditionary corps that had won Mentana by an equal number of Spanish troops, thus setting their own soldiers free for service on the Rhine in case of war. In this way the disagreeable alternative between abandoning Pius IX. or driving Italy into a second Prussian alliance would have been evaded. At any rate, on no imaginable contingency could it matter to France what became of the Spanish throne, unless some service was expected from its occupant in the event of a war to be fought at the imperial convenience for the disunion and dismemberment of Germany. And Germany's great leader had a perfect right to offer a challenge that none but an adversary bent on quarrelling would have taken up.

As it happened, the adversary found himself forced to fight on grounds that exhibited him much more completely in his true character of wanton aggressor and bully. In deference to public opinion, and at his father's desire, the Hohenzollern Prince withdrew his candidature. France scored a diplomatic victory; but the war party in the Emperor's councils continued to play Bismarck's

game. At their instance Benedetti, the French Ambassador to the Prussian Court, received instructions to demand a pledge from King William that the Prince's candidature should not be renewed on any future occasion. The King, who was at that time drinking the waters at Ems, refused to give any such pledge, refusing also, when his answer had been given, to hold any further communications on the subject with Benedetti during the short remainder of his stay at Ems. An account of these proceedings was telegraphed to Bismarck, then at his country seat with the Prussian generals Moltke and Roon as his guests. All three felt much disappointed at the pacific turn events seemed to be taking. According to his own account, Bismarck, by skilful compression, gave the King's message a rather more peremptory appearance than it really possessed, making it look as if William I. had altogether declined to discuss the question of future guarantees in a personal interview with the French Ambassador, which was not true. With the high approval of the two generals Bismarck then telegraphed his amended version of the Ems affair all over Europe. Whether by this bold stroke he really decided the question between peace and war may well be doubted, for the refusal of the last French demands would in any case have been far more effectual than a mere neglect of diplomatic forms in showing that the limits of concession had been reached—especially as the slightest inquiry would have shown that no breach of courtesy had, in fact, been committed; nor does it appear that the Empress Eugénie, who openly spoke of the war as her

work, needed any such trifling occasion to fix a purpose of which dynastic considerations were the sole determining motive.

Bismarck's skilful diplomacy had simply forced the French Empire to appear as what it really was, the aggressor. But for its desire to prevent the completion of German unity and to seize the Rhine provinces there would have been no war. And when the declaration of war came from Paris, the Prussian Minister excited still further prejudice against Napoleon III. by publishing the draft project of a treaty confidentially submitted to him in 1866 for the forcible annexation of Belgium to France, with a guarantee of Prussia's armed support against any Power opposing itself to this act of spoliation. The draft was in the handwriting of the Duc de Gramont, at that time French Ambassador at Berlin; and its genuineness, although long denied, is now admitted on all sides. Even in 1870 the Orleanist *Revue des Deux Mondes* saw nothing objectionable or surprising about the proposal, except that it should have been betrayed by Bismarck.

England, as the Power most interested in Belgian independence, was evidently the Power threatened with war by her imperial ally in the draft treaty, and her Government now hastened to guard against the danger by contracting a treaty with the two belligerents respectively, providing that, "if the armies of either violated the neutrality of Belgium, Great Britain should co-operate with the armies of the other for its defence."[1] Both

[1] Walpole, *History of Twenty-five Years*, vol. ii., p. 505.

Continental Powers eventually agreed to the treaty; but the delay of the French Government in accepting it, as compared with the alacrity of the Germans, suggested that their predatory designs were not yet entirely abandoned. In the opinion of John Stuart Mill, England might have prevented the whole war by threatening to fight the party, whichever it might be, that began hostilities—and in this he was almost certainly right; but the actual state of public morality would hardly have enabled the most popular Government to risk the responsibility of following his chivalrous suggestion.

Within a few weeks from the beginning of hostilities the whole fabric of French Imperialism, so adulated by the higher classes in England, had collapsed. Its legions had laid down their arms to the invader; the Emperor was a prisoner; the Empress and her son, to secure whose succession she had wrought such evils, were fugitives; the temporal power of the Pope had ceased to exist; Paris was surrounded by German armies; and the far-sighted patriots who had vainly protested against making war on such a frivolous pretext as the Ems telegram were vainly struggling under the name of a French Republic to save their country from the dismemberment entailed on it by twenty years of corruption and folly.

The first effect of this catastrophe on European politics was to allow the unification of Italy and of Germany to be completed. The next was to undo one of the results of the Crimean War. As a guarantee for Turkish independence, it had been provided in the Treaty of Paris that Russia should

only be allowed to keep a certain very limited number of warships in the Black Sea, and that the construction or maintenance of arsenals on its shores should be forbidden. The Czar now took advantage of France's prostration to give notice that he no longer considered himself bound by these humiliating restraints on his sovereign rights. In deference to English susceptibilities, it was arranged that a European Conference should be assembled to grant Russia a release from her treaty obligations—a ceremony that she would certainly have dispensed with had the release been refused. What was really the most important consequence of the Crimean War could not be undone by any Czar or any Conference. It stood plain to the eyes of all men in the shape of a united and victorious Germany, constituting a far more effective barrier to Russian ambition than any Black Sea Treaty. Still, the whole transaction proved highly injurious to the prestige of the Gladstone Government; and this impression was still further aggravated not long afterwards by the sentence of a Court of Arbitration condemning England to pay heavy damages for the loss inflicted on American shipping through the depredations of the *Alabama* and her consorts.

Meanwhile, the surrender of Paris brought the war to an end, and France accepted terms dictated by the conqueror. A National Assembly, elected by universal suffrage, succeeded the Government of National Defence imposed on the French people by the mob of Paris. But this Assembly, while it represented the desire of the country for peace, represented it in nothing else. A majority of the

members were Monarchists; and, had it not been for their internal dissensions, a Bourbon Prince utterly out of sympathy with the ideas of modern France would have been placed on the vacant throne. The Parisian working men, already half-maddened by the privations of the siege, still retained the arms and the military organisation given them to be used against the invader. In a frenzy of rage, suspicion, baffled hopes, and Utopian dreams, they refused to obey the newly-constituted Government, drove its agents out of Paris, established a municipal reign of terror, and held the city against the armies of their own countrymen, under the eyes of a German garrison, until the tragedy closed seven weeks later in a carnival of blood and fire.

In France the Paris Commune—to give this abortive attempt at secularist municipalisation its historic name—nearly destroyed the new Republic. In England it not only revived the disdainful old commonplace that the French were unfit for a free government, but it also went far to counteract the democratic current set up by the Northern victory in the American War; and this reaction told especially against Trade Unionism, with which the Commune was, rightly or wrongly, supposed to be in some way connected. A society called the "International Association of Working Men," having for its object to establish a system of mutual support and co-operation among the working men of different countries, came in for a most unwarranted amount of suspicion and abuse on this occasion; and an idea gained ground, recalling upper-class opinion at the time

of the first French Revolution, that the events in Paris heralded the explosion of a vast European conspiracy against property and religion. This sudden panic may account both for the refusal of the Parliamentary Liberals to repeal the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and for the Conservative reaction which, in a few years, reduced the Gladstonian majority to two-thirds of the figure it stood at in 1869.

One more triumph, however, remained for the reforming Cabinet before it succumbed, inwardly and outwardly, to the forces of obscurantism and privilege.

English Radicalism had been identified in Palmerston's time with a policy of retrenchment and disarmament. Now, it might seem at first sight as if the results of the Franco-German War had removed a formidable objection to the application of the anti-militarist programme. For the constant source of our disquietude during Palmerston's last Ministry had been the proximity to our shores of a great military and naval Power, flushed with recent victories, and ruled by a despotic chief, heir to the traditions of the first Napoleon, and suspected of harbouring vindictive designs against England as his uncle's most inveterate enemy. But now, with the overthrow of the French Empire, it seemed as if all fears from that quarter must be dissipated. Absorbed in the work of recovering their old military position, our neighbours would for many years to come have something else to think of than provoking a naval contest with England. If they ever fought again, it would be

in the first instance with Germany for the recovery of the provinces torn away from them by the Treaty of Frankfort; and, in view of that conflict, on which they could not venture without allies, their obvious interest was to cultivate a good understanding with every other nation. With regard to Germany, only panic-mongers could then dream of her as a possible foe, except in the peaceful competitions of industry; indeed, as an effective counterpoise to Russia, her commanding European position seemed more fitted to reassure than to alarm us.

Plausible as such reasonings were, they fell to pieces before the broad fact that Austria and France had indulged in similar dreams of security, and that each had gone down at the first blow because she neglected to keep her military organisation on a level with the requirements of modern warfare. Neither event had been anticipated by political or military experts, nor could either be made a sure ground of prediction for the immediate future. One thing only impressed itself as the paramount condition of national integrity, and this was that the whole fighting power of the country should be held at the disposition of its responsible rulers for employment, if need be, at a week's notice in its defence.

Such was the ideal of Army reorganisation; and to this as near an approach as circumstances permitted was made by the ablest administrator in the Liberal Cabinet, the War Minister, Edward Cardwell, a statesman trained in the unrivalled school of Sir Robert Peel. Sprung like Gladstone from the commercial classes, and, like him, adorned with the highest University honours, Cardwell,

after filling various great offices of State with marked success, undertook the War Office in 1868. Next year his reforms began. He strengthened the home army by withdrawing a considerable number of regiments from the Colonies for service in the British Islands, while at the same time he brought the regular troops into organic connection with the Militia and the Volunteers. In 1870 he made some approach to the German system of short service. Under his predecessors the term of enlistment, originally for life, had been lowered first to twenty-one years, and then to twelve. Cardwell maintained this limit, but divided the term into two periods of six years each, the first to be spent with the colours and the second with the Reserves—an arrangement permitting the soldier's return in early life to some civil occupation. Those who enlisted in regiments destined for home service only might be passed into the Reserves after three years with the colours. It was hoped that in consequence of this change more recruits, and recruits of a better class, would be engaged. In the same year the army was for the first time placed entirely under the control of a responsible Parliamentary head, the Commander-in-Chief being definitely subordinated to the War Office.

In 1871, under the heightened stimulus of Continental example, Cardwell took a further step towards creating an efficient army—the most conspicuous and difficult, if not the most important, of all. He substituted promotion by seniority and merit for promotion by seniority and purchase. This reform is an instance of the beneficent influence exercised by Indian experience on

English administration. It had been first brought into the sphere of practical politics by Sir Charles Trevelyan, a veteran Anglo-Indian official, who also had a great share in opening the Civil Service to candidates chosen by competitive examination; and his son, the present Sir George Trevelyan, became an enthusiastic advocate of the same cause on entering Parliament in 1865, after a residence of six months in India.

Cardwell's scheme for the abolition of army purchase proved an expensive measure, as the existing officers had to be compensated not only for the legal, but also for the illegal, prices they had paid for their commissions. Now, although England is the richest country in Europe, if the continuance of an abuse saves public money, even at the risk of financially ruinous consequences at some future time, arguments against its abolition are always forthcoming; nor were they wanting on this occasion. Had the defenders of the purchase system on its merits been serious, they should have advocated its extension to the navy, the scientific army corps, and, indeed, to the whole public service.

On this as on other occasions the Lords made themselves the agents of plutocratic interests, and passed a wrecking amendment to Cardwell's Bill. Then, to the delight of their supporters in the Commons, the Government took advantage of the circumstance that army purchase had originally been created by Royal Warrant to abolish it by the same means, in defiance of privileged obstruction. Queen Victoria disliked promotion by merit, and did not like offending the Lords; but the habit

of obeying her Prime Minister and the pleasure of exercising her prerogative carried the day, and the barbarous custom of selling offices of trust was abolished by the equally barbarous instrumentality of a Royal Proclamation. Now, as after 1832, the extension of democracy brought with it a more unified authority, making for increased legislative and administrative efficiency.

Army reform was the last triumph of the Liberal Government. As already mentioned, they settled the *Alabama* question, but at the expense of paying an indemnity much in excess of what could be justly claimed for the depredations of the Birkenhead privateers. They passed a Ballot Bill, which, for some unexplained reason, seems to have benefited the Conservative more than the Liberal candidates. Their drink legislation made mortal enemies of the publicans, without doing much to check intemperance. Finally, in order to complete the pacification of Ireland, they proposed to establish a new Irish University without a Professor of Moral Philosophy, without a Professor of Modern History, and with a provision that such Professors as did exist should say nothing at which any of their pupils might think fit, on theological grounds, to take offence. A vote in favour of this grotesque proposal was described by one of the Liberal speakers as a vote of confidence in Cardinal Cullen and his priests. Unluckily for its authors, Cardinal Cullen had no confidence in the Bill. By his orders, or rather by the Pope's, the Irish Catholics voted against it on the second reading. Many Liberals joined in their defection, the whole

Conservative party threw its weight into the same scale, and the Bill was lost by a majority of three. Gladstone at once resigned, and the Queen sent for Disraeli, who, however, refused to take office, leaving his rival to drag out a few more months of discredited political existence.

In January, 1874, the Liberal leader dissolved Parliament on a promise to abolish the income-tax if he were returned to power. But income-taxpayers did not form a majority of the new electorate, and as a class they were more than satisfied with the amount of reform already secured, many even fearing that a new lease of Radicalism would leave them no income to be taxed. Dissenters and Secularists resented the re-endowment of Church schools. Trade Unionist working men were actively hostile to a Government which, against their earnest remonstrances, had passed the Bill making peaceful picketing a crime. Their remedy was to run Labour candidates in opposition to Liberals and Conservatives alike, with the result that in most cases where a triangular contest took place the Conservative won the seat. Working men of an inferior sort resented the actual or threatened restrictions on their opportunities for getting drunk. Thus, although the Conservatives were in a minority on the total poll, they secured a majority of at least fifty in the House of Commons, and that, too, a majority of the most obedient sort; while a large number of the Irish Liberals had been returned as Home Rulers, and might be expected to vote with exclusive regard to obtaining autonomy for their island.

Gladstone resigned before the new Parliament

met, and Disraeli accepted an office which, for the first time in his life, gave him power as well as place. But his ignorance of the English temper remained complete, and the commanding position he now filled merely gave him an opportunity for exhibiting that ignorance more conspicuously than ever before.

Chapter XV.

THE REVOLT OF LITERATURE AND SCIENCE

A period of Conservative reaction in politics is often, if not always, marked by a forward movement in Liberal ideas. We saw how Pitt's reign of terror coincided with a great outburst of speculative activity, and how Peel's triumph was similarly illustrated by the forward-looking thought of early Victorian literature and philosophy. A second and even higher wave of progress follows under the aging Palmerston's retrograde rule, and comes to a pause with the political re-awakening of 1865. Then a more rapid movement of ebb and flow makes itself felt. The Irish Church Bill marks a climax in political Liberalism; the Education Bill and the refusal of fair play to the Trade Unions betray a slackening of fibre in its official representatives, a weak concession to religious and social prejudices. But this temporary halt or retreat is more than compensated by advances in another field.

Matthew Arnold, himself the son of a great Liberal divine, had pushed, at an early age, his father's innovating method to the acceptance of modern pantheism in its most outspoken form. Then, in a strangely obscurantist mood, he had attacked Bishop Colenso for postponing edification

to truth. Yet his last great poem, *Obermann Once More,* published in 1867, and presumably addressed to a popular audience, treats Christianity as an outworn illusion. The triumph of Dissent in 1868 irritated his refined susceptibilities; but this was chiefly because he looked on Dissenters as more illiberal and hardened dogmatists than Catholic Churchmen, whether Anglican or Roman. Religion was the best thing in the world; but, according to Arnold, it stood for enthusiastic morality. His work on *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870) has for its object to show that this was, in effect, what the great Apostle of the Gentiles meant, or, at any rate, that his essential teaching might be preserved without accepting the specific doctrines of orthodox Christianity, or even the doctrines of a personal God and a future life.

Although Arnold had begun as a rather supercilious critic of Dissent, he soon found himself practically fighting on the side of Dissent against the advocates of denominational religious teaching in the Board schools. His next work, *Literature and Dogma* (1873), is an impassioned plea for making the Bible the basis of moral instruction, but a Bible interpreted on principles like those already applied to St. Paul's Epistles—in other words, a Bible totally divested of supernaturalist implications. The objects of his ridicule are not now to be found among members of the Liberation Society, but on the Episcopal Bench; while his most eager readers are to be sought in the Secularist or Agnostic ranks. Finally, his apologetic treatise, *God and the Bible* (1875), is much more successful as a popular version of extreme

rationalistic views than as an attempt to associate new meanings with old beliefs.

Apart from their intrinsic literary merit, which is high, these works of Arnold's deserve to be studied as evidence of the new freedom granted to those who took the unpopular side in religious discussions. Dr. Lushington's decision that a clergyman might lawfully subject any part of the Bible to adverse criticism seems to have released not only the clergy, but the laity also, from those bonds which had hitherto operated in restraint of plain speaking about religion among a people who habitually talked of themselves as the freest in the world. Opinions of a more advanced kind had, indeed, been openly professed for the last twenty years by Holyoake, Bradlaugh, and others, on the platform and in the Press. But these men formed almost a separate world, with publishers and a public of their own, any attempt on their part to associate themselves with the general interests of the people being resented almost as an outrage by the respectables. Indeed, it told heavily against Mill at the Westminster election of 1868 that he had subscribed to the election expenses of Bradlaugh, at that time already a candidate for Northampton. It was a new thing that opinions indistinguishable on the negative side from Bradlaugh's should not only be professed by one of the foremost literary men of the age, but also that they should be first published as articles in the *Cornhill Magazine* and the *Contemporary Review*.

Matthew Arnold passed for being a candid friend of the Churches, and no doubt his mind was so constituted as to feel itself more in sympathy with

their most believing members than with their uncompromising assailants. But there was not room on the needle's point for more than one such graceful performer. Mr. Swinburne, the great rising poet of the day, after devoting some of the loveliest of his *Poems and Ballads* (1866) to the glorification of Greek Paganism at the expense of Christianity, now proceeded, in a volume of revolutionary hymns entitled *Songs Before Sunrise* (1871), to denounce the idea of God with hardly less vehemence than the French Emperor or the Catholic Church. James Thomson, the strong, sombre poet of English pessimism, in his *City of Dreadful Night,* first published in Bradlaugh's *National Reformer* (1874), proclaims as "good tidings of great joy" that there is no God, and that "this little life is all we must endure." Robert Browning, a theistic optimist, who had formerly looked to Christianity for a definite guarantee of immortality, now let it be known that he rejected revelation, contenting himself with the natural religion of Voltaire, Rousseau, Gibbon, and Byron.[1]

Another very distinct indication of the rising current is to be found in Edward Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyát of Omar Khayyám.* Although this poem first appeared in 1859, its great popularity among the cultivated classes dates only from the early

[1] I have put together all the evidence furnished by Browning's poems respecting his attitude towards supernatural religion in my *History of English Rationalism,* vol. ii., pp. 275–83. As the force of my citations has been questioned, I may here refer also to the poet's own categorical statement made in conversation with Robert Buchanan that he was not a Christian (*The Outcast,* p. 198), and to his friend Mrs. Sutherland Orr's equally categorical statement that Browning's faith did not extend to a belief in revealed religion (*Contemporary Review,* vol. lx., p. 880).

'seventies, when the spirit of the age had come into closer sympathy with the hostility to theological teaching expressed in its quatrains, and most of all in those quatrains where the translator's altering and interpolating hand is most clearly visible.

Prose fiction also, where it touches the horizons of life, now indicates a distinct change of outlook as compared with the early Victorian period. Not to mention the novelists who, like Charlotte Yonge, wrote with an avowedly dogmatic purpose, there is a distinct pietistic vein running through the stories of Bulwer Lytton, Dickens, Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë, Charles Reade, and Anthony Trollope. Somewhat later George Eliot, without being herself a believer, adopts a highly sympathetic attitude towards religion. It is therefore somewhat remarkable that, on returning to prose fiction, after a silence prolonged through the reforming era (1866–71), she should exhibit in *Middlemarch,* her most elaborate and splendid performance, a much warmer sympathy with science than with religion. In the novels of her successor, Mr. Thomas Hardy, whose literary career begins at this same time, the repudiation of any interest outside humanity has always been more conclusive, and latterly has been more outspoken. And the same may be said of Mr. George Meredith, whose fame first spread beyond a narrow circle of admirers in the early 'seventies.

Darwin, in his *Origin of Species,* had not expressly gone into the question of man's derivation; and, although there could be no serious doubt about the inclusion of our race under the general

law of evolution by natural selection, it remained open to those who dreaded the great discoverer's authority to contend that he had left the matter undecided. By publishing *The Descent of Man* in 1871, the master closed that door of escape, and definitely placed himself by the side of his German disciple Haeckel. Nor were the English Darwinians at any pains to conceal what they regarded as the inconsistency of the new theory with the old beliefs. While carefully repudiating philosophical materialism, they taught something no less hostile to the idea that the world had been created, or was governed, by a superhuman intelligence and will. In his Presidential Address to the British Association (1874) Professor Tyndall, speaking for the physicists, announces that "we claim and we shall wrest from theology the entire domain of cosmological theory." He "discerns in matter the promise and potency of all terrestrial life." At the same meeting Huxley explained that our so-called voluntary movements are simply processes in the mechanism of the nervous system, connected by an unbroken continuity with the great series of causes and effects composing the sum of existence.

Such a conclusion was already implicit in the law of universal causation which Mill, thirty years earlier, had made the very foundation of inductive logic. But Mill failed to grasp the implications of his own philosophy. Dying at Avignon in 1873, he left behind him three unpublished Essays on Religion, which appeared in the following year. One of these deals with theism. All the usual arguments of natural theology for the existence of a God are passed in review and rejected, with the

single exception of the argument from design, and that only retains a provisional value, subject to the verdict of science on the soundness of Darwin's evolutionary theory. Supposing the origin of species by natural selection, or any other natural law, to be confirmed, theism would be lost. In the absence of such confirmation, the argument from design is allowed to possess a certain value, but only to the extent of creating a presumption that organised beings are the work of an intelligent Being whose power is limited by external conditions. Mill seems to have known very little about the facts of organic evolution, and to have forgotten Hume's destructive criticism of teleology as a basis for theism. A young Darwinian biologist, G. J. Romanes, who had gone very thoroughly into the subject before Mill's book appeared, exposed the fallacy of the great logician in a most convincing way ; and, although himself reconverted to theism at a later period, he seems to have derived his faith from emotional rather than from scientific considerations.

Meanwhile another representative of the new generation who, had he lived, would probably have taken the highest place among England's scientific thinkers, Professor W. K. Clifford, pointed out, in a celebrated lecture on *Body and Mind* (1874), that the intimate connection between mental function and nervous structure suggests a necessary dependence of consciousness on certain material combinations. And a brain of such dimensions as to support the mind of God is not found to exist. Clifford himself was not a materialist, but an idealist; that is to say, he looked on

material phenomena as merely the way in which the minds that form the ultimate elements of existence impress themselves on one another. What distinguished him from the theologians was that, instead of starting with an infinite intelligence and will, he assumes, to begin with, an enormous number of monads, each possessing an infinitesimal share of sensibility and volition, out of which animal and human minds have been built up by a slow process of compounding and recompounding, the resulting units being broken up at death and never afterwards reconstituted.

While theologians were kept on the alert by attacks proceeding from men of the highest scientific reputation on the very foundation of their beliefs, their historical pretensions were challenged by a massive work on *Supernatural Religion* (1874), having for its object to show that the miraculous narratives of the New Testament are so late, so ill-attested, and so self-contradictory as not to merit belief. It was written by a retired Indian official, the late Mr. Walter Cassels, who, however, did not acknowledge himself as the author until many years later. Appearing without any adventitious authority, the book nevertheless at once riveted public attention, and, in spite of its high price, passed through several editions in a few years, successfully braving an elaborate attack from Dr. Lightfoot, the most learned of Anglican divines. As is usual in such literature, the method followed by the orthodox apologist was to fasten exclusively on minor slips and side issues, overlooking the main stress of the rationalist argument.

Criticism of a more ephemeral character, but distinguished in many instances by intellectual merits of a high order, abounded in the lighter literature of the period. Such an onslaught on the popular theology, so ably conducted and marked by such passionate hostility, had never been known before among the higher classes of English society, and has not since been repeated. We have to seek for the explanation of so remarkable a phenomenon in the circumstances of the time. To begin with, the leaders of religious opinion were themselves largely responsible for the quarrel. They had attacked the new scientific theory of evolution and its representatives, as they had formerly attacked the truths of geology, with ignorant misrepresentation and venomous persistence. Even well on in the 'seventies we have it on contemporary evidence that "the rank and file of the Anglican clergy were intensely obscurantist," and that the pulpits rang with declamations against modern science.[1]

Science was perhaps big enough to take care of herself; but her votaries wished knowledge to be diffused as well as increased—more especially as diffusion would make for further increase. They were all for popular education; and here the clergy offered a much more formidable resistance than that opposed to their views about man's place in nature. While still himself a clergyman, J. R. Green, the celebrated historian of the English people, declared that "the clergy knew that a thoroughly educated people, and that people without any uneducated class, would be the ruin of

[1] John Morley, *Struggle for National Education,* p. 61; *On Compromise,* p. 53.

their Establishment. And so they fight every point, but with them it is a fight for life." These words were written before the passing of the Education Act. Clerical influence made the new system far less efficient than it ought to have been by associating it with an increased endowment of denominational teaching. Meanwhile—so at least Green thought—"every day made it more impossible to conciliate the Church of Dogma with the Church of Science." He welcomes the Liberal defeat at the General Election of 1874 as likely to hasten on Disestablishment. State support to a Ritualist Church means "paying money to make England papist."[1]

Pari passu with the new sacerdotal movement, the Romanism which Green and many others looked on as its inevitable terminus was every year assuming a more ominous aspect. We have seen to what dangerous principles the acceptance of Papal infallibility was expected to pledge every consistent Catholic believer. And quite apart from doctrinal implications, the Papacy as a political institution did not commend itself to English Liberalism. Pius IX. actively and openly opposed the unification of Italy. He was universally believed to be counter-working the establishment of a Republic in France. And the formation of a powerful Catholic Opposition in the new German Parliament convinced such good judges as the founders of German unity that the Pope was its deadly enemy. Now, all three causes were supported by the Liberal party in England, to which

[1] *Letters of J. R. Green,* pp. 171–72, 292, 378.

English rationalists, almost without exception, belonged, so that every motive of interest and sympathy impelled them to make war on a system which could be most effectually destroyed by showing that its fundamental assumptions were untrue.

Disraeli had no sympathy with science, and rationalism he thoroughly detested. But, both as a Jew and a Tory, he also hated the Roman Church; and his most entertaining, if not his most brilliant novel, *Lothair* (1870), is directed against Rome's supposed machinations for alluring rich young men into her fold. As Prime Minister, a cardinal principle of his policy was, apparently, to avoid what he considered the mistakes of his predecessor. Now, the overthrow of the Irish Church was, in his opinion, the removal of an important bulwark against Rome. To check Romanising practices within the Anglican Church would have the contrary effect. Probably for this reason Disraeli, though personally not approving of it, gave his support and sympathy to one of the earliest measures of his Administration, the Public Worship Regulation Bill, describing it as a Bill "to put down Ritualism"—a phrase which sent back a large body of High Church support to his rival Gladstone.[1]

More success attended the Tory Government in such of their measures as were designed for the benefit of the working classes; but it must not be forgotten that these were the direct fruit of the

[1] T. E. Kebbel, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. xv., p. 112.

extended suffrage Toryism had so long resisted. As it was, the Trade Unions had some difficulty in holding the Tories to their electioneering pledges. A Commission appointed to consider their grievances only led to "a perfunctory investigation and an inconclusive report." Then, as the result of increased agitation, "the Home Secretary introduced a Bill for altering respectively the civil and criminal law. As amended in Committee by the efforts of A. J. Mundella and others, these measures resulted in Acts which completely satisfied the Trade Union demands. The Criminal Law Amendment Act was repealed." By another Act "definite and reasonable limits were set to the application of the law of conspiracy to trade disputes." A third Act transformed the relation between capitalist and labourer from that between master and servant to that of employer and employee, making them "two equal parties to a civil contract." "Imprisonment for breach of contract was abolished, peaceful picketing permitted, violence and intimidation dealt with as part of the general criminal Code."[1]

To Mundella, the Radical member for Sheffield, also belongs the credit of a new Factory Act, still further reducing the hours of labour for women and children, and indirectly for men, passed in 1874 by the Conservative Home Secretary. This, together with the Factories and Workshops Act of 1878—a measure for consolidating and simplifying the whole mass of legislation on the subject—has given occasion to the unwarrantable boast that the Conservatives are the best friends of the working man.

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, pp. 274–75.

What this friendship really amounts to was shown by a remarkable incident in the Session of 1875, which also illustrates a discreditable habit observed among English politicians of yielding to violence what they will not yield to justice. Samuel Plimsoll, a Nonconformist philanthropist who first entered Parliament in 1868, and was re-elected in 1874, had for some years been devoting himself to schemes for protecting the sailors employed on board merchant ships against the murderous greed of the shipowners. He discovered that it was a common practice to send out unseaworthy vessels insured beyond the value of their cargo with a view to making a profitable speculation in the highly probable event of their going down with all hands on board. According to Plimsoll, rotten old craft were bought up by regular "ship-knackers" for this nefarious purpose. Aided in his campaign by large contributions from the Trade Unions, he introduced more than one Bill for the protection of the unfortunate sailors by a system of official inspection. On his failing to pass a measure for the purpose, popular agitation compelled the Conservative Government to take it up in 1875; but towards the close of the Session they withdrew their Bill. Plimsoll thereupon made a violent scene in the House, shaking his fist in the face of the Ministers, and calling the shipowning members, to whose hostility he attributed the defeat of his efforts, "you villains." Disraeli, with great tact and good temper, let down the exasperated enthusiast as gently as in the circumstances was possible. A temporary Act was at once passed, and something in the way of permanent legislation

was effected the year after, but only, as would seem, with the result that "the evils both of overloading and of unseaworthiness were aggravated by this well-meant attempt to check them."[1] It does not appear that the method of making owners penally responsible for the loss of life, if any, due to their calculated negligence has been tried.

To restore Army purchase outright was beyond the power of the Tory Government. But they brought back the principle in an underhand way by a Bill enabling poor officers who exchanged into regiments ordered to India to accept a sum of money from those whose places they took, and who were willing to hire substitutes—for that was what the arrangement really meant—that they might be relieved from the obligation of serving their country in that disagreeable manner.

Among the provisions of Forster's Education Act which gave offence to Nonconformists the Twenty-fifth Section, although not the most important, was the one particularly singled out for attack. It "enabled School Boards to pay the school-pence of the children of the indigent parents at whatever school, denominational or otherwise, the indigent parent might select."[2] In 1876 the obnoxious clause was repealed; but, as the new Act merely transferred the payment of school-pence from the School Board to the Guardians, the grievance of those who objected to being taxed for a religious education of which they did not approve remained the same, and was even aggravated

[1] *Social England*, vol. vi., p. 615.
[2] Morley, *Struggle for National Education*, p. 8.

by an increase of the Government subsidy to the denominational schools, amounting in most instances to an additional half-crown per child.[1] As a set-off against this reactionary policy, the Act of 1876 took a long step towards creating adequate machinery for obliging parents to provide for the education of their children.[2]

Perhaps the most beneficent work of the Conservative Government was the institution by their Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Northcote, of a Sinking Fund. In the Budget of 1875 a fixed charge of twenty-eight millions was assigned to the service of the National Debt. What remained of this sum after paying the interest was to be spent on the redemption of debt, and, as under the arrangement contemplated less would be paid as interest every year, the amount available for paying off capital would be increased to the same extent. Two conditions, however, were involved in the perfect working of the scheme. The first is that no new debt should be contracted, the second that the Sinking Fund should be kept inviolate; and neither of these has been invariably observed. Still, the actual effect of Northcote's scheme has been to reduce our liabilities considerably below the level at which they would otherwise have stood, placing us, so far, in a more hopeful position than is occupied in this respect by any other great European Power. And for this, as I have already noticed, we have to thank no practical statesman, Liberal or Conservative, but the far-sighted philosopher John Stuart Mill.

[1] Holman, *English National Education*, pp. 202–3.
[2] *Ibid*, pp. 201–2.

Chapter XVI.

THE EMPRESS OF INDIA'S GRAND VIZIER

Disraeli, on taking office for the last time, announced that his programme would be *sanitas sanitatum, omnia sanitas*. Years afterwards Robert Lowe suggested that the original saying of Ecclesiastes would have better described his performance. In fact, the sanitary measures of the Conservative Administration were limited to the Artisans' Dwellings Act of 1875, the Alkali Act of 1874, and the Pollution of Rivers Act of 1876. Of these the first proposed to pull down what are called rookeries, and to replace them by healthier habitations. But the owners of the rookeries were to be compensated on such a liberal scale as to make the cost of demolishing them prohibitive. The other two Acts, good as far as they went, seem to have been somewhat restricted in their operation.[1] "The Commons Act for preventing illegal inclosures and securing open spaces for the people" may also be mentioned in this connection for what it is worth.[2]

Such squalid interests, however, could at no time have engrossed much of the Hebrew Premier's florid imagination. To exhibit England

[1] *Social England,* vol. vi., p. 616.
[2] Kebbel, *History of Toryism,* p. 369.

as an Asiatic Power by sending the Prince of Wales on a tour through India, and by having Queen Victoria proclaimed Empress of India (much to the disgust of her English subjects), were triumphs better suited to his Oriental temperament. But these also were vanities compared with what the statesmanship of Chatham and Palmerston had achieved. It was really Palmerston's brilliant Eastern diplomacy that had inspired the dreams of *Tancred,* as Palmerston's anti-Russian policy was next to inspire the waking schemes of *Tancred's* author. For Disraeli, who had so bitterly taunted Peel with appropriating other people's ideas, was himself as a practical politician much less original than Peel, and much less felicitous also in his choice of models. An opportunity soon presented itself for showing how little his wonderful histrionic powers qualified him for dealing with the realities of European history, how unsafe it was to copy Palmerston when the conditions under which Palmerston acted were no longer there.

Carlyle, writing in 1870, referred to the Turk of Charles V.'s time as "a quasi-infernal roaring lion in the height of his sanguinary fury and fanaticism, not sunk to *caput mortuum* and a torpid nuisance as now."[1] Yet what happened in Syria ten years before showed that the Turk could revert without warning to his former character. In the summer of 1860 the Maronites, a Christian tribe inhabiting Mount Lebanon, were treacherously attacked and

[1] Carlyle, *Miscellaneous Essays,* vol. vii., p. 243 (People's edition).

massacred by their old enemies the Druses, with the connivance and assistance of the Turkish officials and the Turkish garrison. One hundred and fifty villages were burned, six thousand Christians murdered, two thousand women sold into slavery. By orders from Constantinople the perpetrators of these horrors were allowed to get off with almost complete impunity.[1]

In 1863 Professor Goldwin Smith addressed a letter to the *Daily News* clearly setting forth the position of the Turks as a barbarous horde encamped on European soil, incapable of founding any permanent civilisation in the regions over which they held sway. A new Turkish loan was launched on the London market that year, and it would have been well for English investors had they laid to heart the prophetic warning of the philosophic historian.

Thanks to the blind greed of Western capitalism, the barbarian horde held its own for yet a while. In 1866 the Cretan Greeks rose against the Turks, and the insurrection was hailed by Mr. Swinburne in an ode half of triumph at the revival of liberty, half of sorrow at the supineness of Europe. But the Powers refused to interfere, and Lord Stanley, the English Foreign Secretary, gave orders that Greek fugitives were not to receive shelter on board English men-of-war.

At last the breaking-point was reached. The rising of the Bosnian Christians against their Mohammedan oppressors in 1875 so strained the

[1] De la Gorce, *Histoire du Second Empire,* vol. iii., pp. 314–44. My authority for the numbers given is Lavallée, *Histoire des Français,* continuée par Frédéric Lock, vol. vi., p. 174.

resources of the Turkish Government that after twenty years of ruinous extravagance, fed by the loans of credulous investors, it became bankrupt, reducing the interest on its five per cent. debt to one half, and soon failing to pay even that diminished amount.

Meanwhile Turkey's chief vassal, Ismail, the Khedive of Egypt, who had been running a similar career of extravagance, found himself in almost as desperate straits. His unfortunate serfs had been squeezed to the last piastre by a process of extortion unprecedented even in a record going back through at least five thousand years of monotonous oppression. Foreign capital, alarmed by the catastrophe at Constantinople, declined to take any further risk. One resource, however, still remained available. A great French engineer, overcoming the physical obstacles presented by the Isthmus of Suez, and the still more formidable resistance of Lord Palmerston, had at last succeeded in connecting the Mediterranean with the Red Sea by a ship canal. As the price of his assistance a number of shares in the enterprise were allotted to Ismail. It was understood that these must be sold to cover his immediate liabilities, and the French Government was spoken of as a likely purchaser. At this juncture Mr. Frederick Greenwood, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette,* and at that time beyond dispute the ablest journalist in London, sought an audience of the Prime Minister, and appealed to him not to let the opportunity escape. Perhaps the idea of turning what Palmerston had thought a menace into a bulwark of England's power stirred Disraeli's imagination. At any rate, he agreed to pay four

million sterling for the shares. In the Cabinet this step was opposed by the two Ministers whose departments it most interested—Lord Stanley, the Foreign Secretary, and Sir Stafford Northcote, the Chancellor of the Exchequer; in the House of Commons the Liberal leaders unanimously condemned it. But the *Times* supported Disraeli, and the vocal section of public opinion acquiesced. Abroad people regarded buying the shares as equivalent to buying the Canal, and buying the Canal as equivalent to an English Protectorate over Egypt. As things then stood, the immediate military occupation of the Nile valley by English troops would probably not have called forth any effective protest, and would have prevented much bloodshed in the years to come. But the cohesion of a Cabinet unenterprising by the very law of its existence would not have resisted this further strain.

What made the insurrection in Bosnia and Herzegovina so dangerous to Turkey was that the scene of action lay just outside the door of a great Christian Power. Austria could not view with indifference a contest raging on her frontier and throwing crowds of refugees on her charity for support. Andrassy, the Austrian Chancellor, drew up a Note, to which all the great Powers adhered, pressing certain administrative reforms on the Porte. The Porte accepted them; but the insurgents, knowing what Turkish promises were worth, fought on. Then Carlyle's quasi-infernal roaring lion woke up. "On May 6th, 1876, the Prussian and French Consuls at Salonica were

attacked and murdered by the mob."[1] The Chancellors of the three Empires drew up a Memorandum threatening forcible intervention unless immediate steps were taken to put the promised reforms into execution. Of the other three Powers England alone refused her adhesion to the Memorandum. Immediately after this the Sultan Abdul Aziz was deposed and murdered in prison. His successor Murad, after a three months' reign, was also deposed and replaced by the present Sultan, Abdul Hamid, a ruler in whom the anti-human instincts of his race have embodied themselves with ideal perfection, unrelieved by any trace of the Ottoman's dauntless physical courage.

During that summer events came to light which opened the eyes of at least some Englishmen to the real character of the Power with whose doings their Government declined to interfere. In April the insurrectionary movement had spread from Herzegovina to Bulgaria. Here the Turks had a freer hand, and they applied their traditional methods of repression on a more comprehensive scale. Two correspondents of the *Daily News* first made known to Western Europe the story, since often repeated, of massacre and torture inflicted by Turkish irregular troops on Christian men, women, and children. There may have been some exaggeration about the first accounts. There generally is exaggeration on these occasions. The Sepoy mutineers did not commit all, or nearly all, the horrors ascribed to them by English journalists at the time. But we do not therefore reject as mythical the

[1] Fyffe, *History of Modern Europe,* vol. iii., p. 479.

narratives, written from ocular testimony, of what happened at Delhi and Cawnpore. And in this instance we have the official report of an English Secretary of Legation sent from Constantinople to collect evidence on the spot. It estimates the number of slaughtered Bulgarians at 12,000. At Batak "the villagers were summoned by Achmet Aga to give up their arms, and were solemnly assured by him that, if they did so, their lives would be spared. They obeyed, and gave him their money, too. Achmet promptly set the Bashi-Bazouks upon them, who slaughtered them like sheep. Twelve hundred who took refuge in a church were burnt alive. For this exploit Achmet received the order of the Medjidie."[1]

Disraeli, when first questioned about the massacres, spoke of the newspaper reports as "coffee-house babble." That babble was soon to be used as the instrument of his overthrow. Early in September Gladstone, accepting the correspondence of the *Daily News* as, on the whole, trustworthy, published a pamphlet entitled *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East,* in which he demanded the expulsion of the Turkish executive officers "from the province they had desolated and profaned." Disraeli, who had been recently raised to the peerage under the title of Earl of Beaconsfield, replied by a protest against the politicians who made use of such incidents for party purposes, "comparing them unfavourably with the perpetrators of the Bulgarian massacres."[2]

[1] H. Paul, *Modern England,* vol. iv., p. 12.
[2] *Ibid,* p. 13.

Apparently, his idea was that our Indian Empire would not be safe unless the Turks continued to keep Russia out of Constantinople, and that a statesman who urged his countrymen to abandon Turkey was for that reason a traitor to England. It was possible to retort, as Freeman the historian actually did, that an empire which could be preserved only at the cost of condoning Turkish atrocities had better be abandoned. Lord Beaconsfield's admirers were evidently not prepared openly to repudiate the idea of applying morality to politics, for, whereas Freeman had said, "Perish our empire in India rather than justice," they studiously quoted him as having said, "Perish India!" and their misrepresentation had such success that Queen Victoria waited some weeks to confirm his appointment to the Professorship of Modern History at Oxford until she was able to satisfy herself about the truth of this report.

In point of fact, the preservation of our empire involved no such disgraceful complicity with the crimes of Achmet Aga. It is very doubtful whether, in any case, our communications with the Far East would be endangered by the presence of a Russian army at Constantinople. With the Suez Canal in our possession, the danger becomes exceedingly small. Nor was there at that time any serious question of a Russian advance to the Bosporus. Austria, whose interests were more concerned than ours to prevent it, would have blocked the way. Russia herself did not wish for war; nor, if Gladstone's demand of autonomy for Bulgaria had been conceded, would there have been any war. To secure this end no more was needed

than a peremptory representation from England. As it was, the Turks resisted because England made no such demand, and because, when Russia made it, they felt sure that their old ally would not leave them in the lurch.

For a moment it seemed as if the Christians of the Balkan Peninsula could recover their freedom unaided. Aspiring to play the part of a new Piedmont, Servia declared herself independent, and joined with Montenegro, which had always been independent, in making war on the Porte, thousands of Russian volunteers flocking to take part in the new crusade. Unfortunately the Servians were neither themselves a fighting race, nor were they led by a brave Prince; while the Turks, besides wielding far greater resources, showed that their old military capacity still survived in unbroken vigour. Montenegro did wonders; but a series of disasters laid Servia at the feet of her old conquerors before the summer of 1876 was over, to be saved only by Russia's imperative intercession.

Then followed six months of negotiation between the Porte and a reconstituted European Concert. The Powers were agreed in demanding a reformed administration for the Christian provinces of the Balkan Peninsula, with an armed executive Commission to enforce their decrees. All might have been peaceably arranged had not Beaconsfield, with his usual genius for plagiarism, set himself to repeat the part played by Palmerston in 1853–54, totally misconceiving the difference of circumstances, the aim, and the spirit that distinguished his model

from himself. Palmerston had struck at Russia as the enemy of European liberty no less than as the rival of England; Turkey had at least protected Kossuth; with the help of English capital she might be started on a new career of peaceful progress and unsectarian enlightenment; the English people were burning to avenge the wrongs of Hungary; best of all, Louis Napoleon was ready to sell the co-operation of his army and fleet for the cheap price of an introduction to good society. In 1876 not only had all this changed, but, as if to heighten the force of contrast, the political situation of 1859 naturally recurred to the memory of thoughtful people as an exact parallel and precedent for England's guidance in this new crisis of her fate. Then, also, Conservative alarmists had ridiculed the pretensions of a despot to come forward as the champion of a struggling nationality; they had recalled the policy of selfish aggrandisement invariably pursued by French conquerors beyond the Alps; they had recommended us to stand by Austria as the defender of European treaties and the old ally of England. Yet their predictions had all been falsified, and their preferences had contributed to Disraeli's own defeat in the General Election that took place during the Franco-Austrian War. That the cause of the Balkan populations had succeeded to the cause of Italy in the sympathies of English Liberalism had been made abundantly clear by a message of encouragement from the veteran Whig Lord Russell to the Herzegovinian insurgents, and by the enormous success of Gladstone's pamphlet on Bulgarian horrors, which was selling at the rate

of 10,000 copies a day. But, as we have seen, it was a guiding principle with the Tory chief to avoid what seemed to be the ruinous mistakes of his rival, and among those mistakes the most ruinous, in his opinion, was an insufficient assertion of England's power. He forgot that, since Elizabeth, England has only intervened with success and satisfaction to herself on the side of nations struggling to be free.

In a speech delivered at the Guildhall on November 9th, 1876, Beaconsfield declared that England was ready to fight three campaigns in a righteous cause—meaning, presumably, the cause of Abdul Hamid and Achmet Aga. After such a defiance the Czar could not draw back; after such an encouragement the Turk would not yield. A Conference held at Constantinople to press the demands of united Europe on the Porte failed to impress the wily barbarians, who knew, thanks to the English Premier's speech, what to think of its unity. On April 24th, 1877, Russia began what the *Spectator* described, with truth, as "the most just and necessary war of our time."

England had not the glory of making that war unnecessary by sending her fleet to bring the Sultan to reason. She narrowly escaped the infamy of aggravating it by sending her fleet to his support. "There is reason to believe that preparations were actually made, that commanders were chosen, and instructions were almost on their way, which would have committed the country beyond recall. Carlyle heard of this, not, as he said, from idle rumour, but from some authentic source," with the happy result that he wrote a short

letter to the *Times* denouncing, in veiled but significant terms, the scheme of "our miraculous Premier" to the world. What the Premier was actually planning has not yet transpired; but the fleet did not sail, and "this, perhaps," observes his biographer, "was the most useful act in Carlyle's whole life."[1]

Be her cause just or unjust, Russia's generals conduct the operations of war with the same invariable stupidity. On this occasion, as before in the Crimea and afterwards on a far greater scale in Manchuria, her armies suffered a series of discreditable defeats; and the same section of English society that had applauded Louis Napoleon, the Southern slave-holders, and Governor Eyre, now found fresh cause for congratulation in the performances of the victorious Pashas. At last a competent strategist, Todleben, the defender of Sebastopol, was placed in virtual command of the Czar's invading armies, and the Turkish defence collapsed at every point. On advancing to within striking distance of Constantinople the conquerors found themselves confronted by an English fleet. Again war seemed imminent, and again prudent counsels prevailed. Without entering the enemy's capital, Russia was in a position to dictate terms of peace. Her demands were, in the circumstances, not excessive. Originally undertaken for the deliverance of Bulgaria, the war was to have for its chief result the constitution of an autonomous Bulgarian Principality, with a population of four millions and a territory somewhat less

[1] Froude, *Life of Carlyle*, vol. iv., pp. 441–42.

than Roumania and Servia put together. Any increase in the number of people released from Turkish administration represented a pure gain to humanity; and the larger the country they occupied, the better chance would they have of maintaining their independence against Russia.

Such, however, was not the opinion of the English Ministry, who looked on the proposed principality as Russia's predestined ally in any future advance on Constantinople, just as Roumania had been her ally in the recent campaign. Their protest took the form of a demand that the Treaty of San Stefano, as it was called, should be subjected to the revision of a European Congress. Russia, who had performed single-handed the office Europe had declined, naturally objected to having her work pulled to pieces by those who looked on while she fought. For the third time war came in sight—on this occasion, however, with the likelihood that Austria would be our ally. Two Ministers, Derby and Carnarvon, representing the peace party in the Cabinet, resigned; a credit of six millions was voted, the Reserves were called out, and 7,000 Sepoys were brought from India to Malta—a trumpery reinforcement, of whose ability to face European troops some authorities expressed their doubts.

On June 3rd, 1878, the new Foreign Secretary, Lord Salisbury, announced that Russia—alarmed, as was left to be supposed, by our more or less imposing display of power—had consented to lay the Treaty of San Stefano before a European Congress. Unfortunately, the day after the Congress met at Berlin it transpired that the

labours of that august assembly had been forestalled by a private arrangement made between Lord Salisbury himself and Count Schouvaloff, the Russian Ambassador in London. An outsider employed by the Foreign Office to copy the secret treaty had made a private copy for himself, and had sold it to the *Globe* newspaper, which published the text *in extenso* on the evening of June 14th.

England alone had made the subjection of the Treaty of San Stefano to a European Congress a question of peace or war. It now appeared that she was ready to back up every demand of Russia except one. Instead of a big Bulgaria, there was to be a little one, with a territory two-fifths of the size originally determined, and a population reduced from four to one and a-half millions. Another fifth, with a population of nearly a million, was to be formed into a province called Eastern Roumelia, to be placed more directly under Turkish sovereignty, but with guarantees against its worst abuses. The remaining two-fifths reverted to the chances of alternate oppression and anarchy. As a fee for her good offices England was to occupy Cyprus, paying tribute for it to the Porte.

Beaconsfield and Salisbury represented England in the rather farcical gathering of diplomatists who met at Berlin to register the articles of the secret treaty. Such was the dread and hatred of Russia entertained at that time by the German people, and such the influence of Hebrew journalists on public opinion, that the not very great concessions extorted from Prince Gortchakoff by Beaconsfield made our Prime Minister the idol of all classes in Germany, even

the historian Mommsen ranking him with Pitt.[1] Received on his return to London by a cheering multitude, the great master of hollow phraseology favoured them with his most felicitous creation: "We bring you back peace with honour." Peace had not been endangered by anyone but himself; and the honour was rather for his personality than for his adopted country.

Palmerston's first challenge to Russia in Europe had been met by a counter-mine at Cabul, exploding in disastrous war. His imitator was now to experience the consequences of the same policy in much the same way.

In January, 1876, Disraeli sent out Lord Lytton, son of Bulwer-Lytton, the novelist and statesman, as Viceroy to India. With the temperament but without the genius of a poet, the new ruler had hitherto been known, or rather notorious, for the extent and audacity of his literary plagiarisms. As a practical statesman he habitually set himself above precedent and advice, sometimes with good, sometimes with evil consequences. Because the liberty of the Press has been defended on grounds of abstract right, he failed to see that it may be defended with better reason on grounds of practical expediency, summarily disposing of it as "a fetish" —a nickname which his party are now using as an excellent substitute for argument in their campaign against Free Trade. His own fetish was State interference. But the methods of benevolent despotism are better fitted to cope with famine

[1] Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte*, Bd. v., p. 264.

than with discontent; and if Lord Lytton gagged the Hindoo Press, he fed the Hindoo people. Beyond the Indian frontier his policy of not letting things alone proved fruitful of mischief. His tactless efforts to bring Shere Ali, the Ameer of Afghanistan, permanently within the sphere of British influence, merely drove that half-insane potentate to seek protection from the ever-advancing power of Russia. An opportunity soon occurred for making himself agreeable to his Northern neighbour, with the advantage, at the same time, of reading a lesson to the meddlesome Viceroy. Beaconsfield's threat to draw on India for reinforcements naturally suggested to the Czar's advisers a scheme for giving the Indian Army employment nearer home. While the issues of peace and war were still pending in the West, a Russian envoy left for Cabul—probably to negotiate an alliance with Afghanistan. He arrived after the Congress had done its work, and withdrew after a short visit, his continued stay not being thought desirable by the suspicious Afghans. Lytton had previously broken off all relations with Shere Ali; but it seemed intolerable that a Russian envoy should be received where admission had been denied to the representatives of the Empress of India. Accordingly, without the Ameer's consent and against his known wishes, a British Mission, accompanied by an escort of 200 armed men, was dispatched to Cabul, but was stopped immediately after crossing the frontier by an Afghan official, and forbidden to advance any further until instructions had been received from the Ameer. The Afghans, as an independent people, were clearly within their rights

in acting as they did ; but the Indian Government, like the French Government in 1870, wanted to pick a quarrel for the purpose of securing what was called a scientific frontier by annexing a piece of Afghan territory. The pretended insult to our Embassy furnished a welcome pretext for an iniquitous war of conquest.

Shere Ali fled before the invaders, and died soon afterwards in exile. His son, Yacoub, accepted a treaty ceding the scientific frontier, and agreeing to the establishment of a British Resident at Cabul. Sir Louis Cavagnari, the officer chosen to occupy that perilous position, entered on his duties on July 24th, 1878. Six weeks afterwards he and the whole Mission were massacred by the Afghans, with the connivance, as is believed, of Yacoub. This catastrophe necessitated a second war, leading to the temporary dismemberment of the country, the southern division, Candahar, being retained in our possession. Still the tribesmen fought on, and even inflicted on us at Maiwand (July 27th, 1880) the most signal defeat ever suffered by a British army at the hands of Asiatics. Our military position was retrieved by the brilliant strategy of General Roberts, whose decisive victory at Candahar brought the war to an end. By this time a Liberal Ministry had succeeded to office ; the just demands of the Afghans were conceded ; Candahar was reunited to Afghanistan ; and the new Ameer, Abdurrahman, entered into friendly relations with the Indian Government, which abandoned the unlucky attempt to force a British Resident on the Afghan ruler when a native envoy answered the same purpose much better. Meanwhile, India had

to pay £17,000,000 for an unjust and unnecessary war.

Among the few territorial gains assigned to England by the Congress of Vienna, the Cape of Good Hope was one. It had been taken from the Dutch at a time when their country was a vassal of the French Empire; and, being a station on the ocean route to India, it seemed too valuable a possession to part with when Holland regained her independence on the restoration of peace. But the old colonists, known as Boers, who were mostly Dutch or French, did not take kindly to British rule. After a time great numbers of them migrated across the Orange and Vaal Rivers, founding new settlements whose independence the Cape Government recognised in 1853 and 1854 under the names of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal Republic. Meanwhile the native Africans, a robust and high-spirited race, by the multiplication of their numbers effectually prevented the white colonisation of the country on such a scale as obtained in America and Australia. Their frequent revolts involved us in expensive wars, and at the same time kept alive the military spirit of the Boers.

In 1877 the Transvaal Republic had become nearly bankrupt, and was reported to be in danger of invasion by the Zulus, who, under the administration of their king, Cetywayo, had developed a formidable military power. At the suggestion of some settlers, who probably expected to make their fortunes under a more efficient government, the Transvaal was annexed by proclamation to the

British Crown without the consent, and against the wish, of the Boer population. Had our agent, Sir Theophilus Shepstone, who was personally responsible for the annexation, been content to wait a little longer, the same result might have been amicably obtained.

At that time it was a favourite scheme with English statesmen to unite the whole of South Africa into a single Confederation, somewhat after the style of the Dominion of Canada. In furtherance of this scheme Lord Carnarvon, the Conservative Colonial Secretary, sent out Sir Bartle Frere, an Anglo-Indian official of high character and ability, as Governor of Cape Colony and High Commissioner for the settlement of native affairs. Cetywayo, who had been deeply offended at seeing the Transvaal rescued from his grasp, proved a formidable obstacle in Frere's path. An ultimatum practically demanding the break-up of his army and the surrender of his independence was sent to the Zulu King. On the expiration of the time allowed for an answer, the High Commissioner declared war, without the authorisation of the Home Government and contrary to their instructions. The force at his disposal seems to have been insufficient for its destination, besides being led by one of our incompetent titled generals, Lord Chelmsford. Owing to his bad management, a force of 1,774 British soldiers and 650 natives was surprised and defeated by 20,000 Zulus, with the loss of half its numbers.

Had the policy of Sir Bartle Frere proved immediately successful, his disobedience would probably have been condoned and rewarded. When the

news of the disaster, for which he was not responsible, reached England the Beaconsfield Government censured, but did not recall him. At this distance of time we can see that their violations of justice and expediency were far more flagrant in the case of Bulgaria and Afghanistan than in the case of South Africa. Yet in both instances they received the support of many Liberal members, whereas the whole Liberal Opposition united in a vote of censure on their lenient treatment of the man who, on his own responsibility, had involved us in an unprovoked and unlucky war. Their party majority saved them from defeat; but it was understood that the Liberals had public opinion at their back.

After a six months' campaign, Lord Chelmsford succeeded in decisively defeating his barbarian opponents. Before their final overthrow they had unconsciously rendered a service to French as well as to English Liberalism. The Prince Imperial, as the fallen French Emperor's heir was entitled, had gone out to the Cape as a volunteer in order to acquire some of that military reputation which is the obligatory stock-in-trade of a Bonapartist pretender. He fell into a Zulu ambush, and, by his death, relieved France from the fear of an Imperialist restoration. His sword had not made women childless; but the sentence of the Hebrew prophet seemed to be carried out with terrible appropriateness on her who had forced on the Franco-German War that her son's succession to a tottering throne might be secured.

A period of commercial and agricultural distress

at home came to reinforce the effect of disaster and discredit abroad. In Ireland the bad harvest of 1879 led to the association of an agrarian agitation for reduced rents—or, in some instances, for no rent—with the chronic political agitation for Home Rule. In Great Britain the influence of political journalism, once so powerful, on public opinion now gave place utterly to the influence of platform oratory, not merely on the audience who heard it delivered, but on the far greater multitude who read reports of it in the daily Press. Two speakers, in particular, made an unprecedented impression—Sir William Harcourt on the educated classes, by coruscations of wit and epigram recalling Disraeli in his best days, Gladstone on the many, by an impassioned eloquence beside which Bright's more carefully studied and classic periods seemed cold and tame.

So insecure did the Conservative leaders feel their position to be that they seemed to contemplate the advisability of letting Parliament sit out the legal term of its existence. Then something that looked very like a gigantic job in connection with a Bill for buying out the London Water Companies raised an outcry before which they found it expedient to retreat by means of an appeal to the country (March, 1880).

"We always knew," said Gladstone, with unwonted pleasantry, "that water would dissolve salt, but not that it would dissolve a Parliament." In this instance it dissolved a Government and a whole political system as well. At the General Election of 1880 the Conservatives lost 112 seats. As against Liberals and Home Rulers combined, they were in

a minority of 173; as against the Liberals alone, they were in a minority of 107. If the Home Rulers—of whom there were 61—should combine with the Conservatives, the Liberals would still be in a majority of 46.

The dominant party owed its victory, not only to popular enthusiasm, but also to a new system of electoral organisation known, by the misapplication of an American political term, as the Caucus. Candidates for the Parliamentary representation of the constituencies, when they were not the nominees of a local magnate, used, in many instances, to be supplied by the London clubs or similar centralised agencies. The object of those who instituted the Caucus was to hand over this office to a permanent local association chosen by the electors themselves. Each member of the association was elected by a group of electors, constituting what is called a primary, recognised as permanently belonging to the same party, and periodically convoked to choose a representative, just like the larger body of which they formed a subsection. Where this arrangement worked normally, it operated as a healthy development of the representative system, giving the electors a sustained interest in current political questions, and bringing members of Parliament into closer political touch with the opinions and sentiments of those to whom they owed their place in the great Council of the nation.

This excellent system, which has since been adopted by the Conservatives also, was introduced by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, the member for Birmingham, at that time leader of the advanced Radicals, a strong opponent of State-aided

denominational education, and a strong supporter of Gladstone's Eastern policy. His opinions were supposed to be largely inspired by Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. John Morley, with whom he acted in close alliance. In extent and accuracy of knowledge both were immensely Mr. Chamberlain's superiors; but neither of them could compare with him as an orator or a practical statesman. Many looked on him as Gladstone's destined successor in the leadership of the Liberal party. Meanwhile, his services as the organiser of victory were recognised on the formation of a new Ministry by the bestowal on him of Cabinet rank in the Administration formed by Gladstone when the General Election drove Beaconsfield from power.

Chapter XVII.

THE LAST PALADINS

It is remarkable that Gladstone's second Ministry included a number of statesmen who had opposed, as not being Liberal enough, his education policy of 1870 and 1873. Mr. Chamberlain, as I have said, obtained a seat in the Cabinet; and if Fawcett, Mundella, Sir Charles Dilke, and Mr. G. O. Trevelyan occupied less prominent positions, it was felt that they represented the future, and that the leanings of the Government, as a whole, would be largely determined by their opinions.

It soon appeared, however, that the religious liberality of the Ministerial majority hardly equalled the promise of the Front Bench. Among the newly-elected Radical members, one of the most remarkable was Charles Bradlaugh. We have already come across him as a leader in the Secularist movement. Being a powerful public speaker and interested in other things besides rationalistic criticism, he had contested Northampton in 1868, but was defeated by a large majority. In 1880 he had better success, polling 675 more than the higher of the two Conservative candidates, the leading local brewer.

When Parliament met, on May 3rd, Bradlaugh presented himself at the table of the House of Commons and claimed leave to be admitted on his affirmation, instead of taking the usual oath, under

an Act passed for the relief of non-theistic witnesses in courts of justice. The point was referred to a Select Committee, which decided, by the casting vote of its chairman, that the claim was invalid. Bradlaugh then expressed his readiness to take the oath, and had already presented himself for the purpose when Sir Henry Drummond Wolff protested against his being permitted to do so. Such an intervention, as afterwards appeared, was illegal, and ought not to have been sanctioned by the Speaker, who, however, was on this occasion weak enough to permit it. The Prime Minister then carried a Resolution for the appointment of a fresh Committee to consider the question of Bradlaugh's competence to be sworn. As a result of questions put to him about his religious opinions, but in express contradiction to his own declarations on the subject, the Committee decided that an oath would not bind his conscience, and for that reason refused him permission to take it. His colleague in the representation of Northampton, Mr. Labouchere, then moved that Bradlaugh should be permitted to affirm. The House refused permission by 275 to 230, thirty-six Liberals and thirty-one Home Rulers voting in the majority. In the course of the debate John Bright declared that, "to a large extent, the working people of this country do not care any more for the dogmas of Christianity than the upper classes care for the practice of that religion."[1]

Again Bradlaugh claimed to be sworn, and this time, on his refusing to withdraw, was forcibly

[1] J. M. Robertson, in the *Life of Charles Bradlaugh*, by his Daughter, vol. ii., p. 235. In my whole account of the Bradlaugh incident I have followed Mr. Robertson.

removed and imprisoned in the Clock Tower, but was set free next day. A fresh vote of the House permitted him to affirm, subject to the decision of the law-courts on the legality of the proceeding. Judgment having been given against him in the following March (1881), Bradlaugh lost his seat, and was re-elected, although by a greatly diminished majority. On presenting himself to be sworn, he encountered the same refusal, and was afterwards forcibly prevented from entering the House. Next Session (1882) the same drama re-enacted itself a third time, with an important variation, for on this occasion Bradlaugh administered the oath to himself, disobeyed the order for his exclusion, and was expelled from the House. Re-elected once more, after a year's delay caused by complicated legal proceedings and abortive attempts to secure his peaceful admission, Bradlaugh repeated his old tactics, and, on their failure, voluntarily resigned his seat. Northampton returned him by a higher figure than ever, although not by so great a majority as in 1880. The long conflict was nearing its close. Retaining his seat at the General Election of 1885, Bradlaugh was allowed, by the ruling of a new Speaker, to be quietly sworn. In 1888 he carried an Affirmation Bill through both Houses of Parliament, with the support, among others, of the Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1891, while he lay dying, the Resolutions excluding him in former years were expunged from the records of the House.

It is possible that some of the majorities against Bradlaugh in the Parliament of 1880 may have been swelled by the unpopularity attached to his

name in certain circles as the publisher of a neo-Malthusian pamphlet and an assailant of the House of Brunswick. But that the surviving spirit of religious bigotry is responsible for by far the greater part of the hostility he encountered seems probable, especially when viewed in the light of another and much less famous episode, now to be fully related for the first time in an English history.

While the question of Parliamentary oaths was giving rise to acrimonious debates in the House of Commons, the more general question of the limits to free discussion in religious matters came once more before a court of law. In February, 1883, Mr. G. W. Foote, a leading member of the Secularist party, was prosecuted, with two other persons, for the publication of a special Christmas number of the *Freethinker,* in which were certain woodcuts ridiculing the objects of Christian worship. Probably the contents of the publication were of an offensive character—as the attacks on various royal and noble personages in *Punch* used to be—and would have disgusted many who had no more theological belief than Mr. Foote. But nobody was obliged to read the incriminated publication, and a mere glance at the cover was enough to warn off anyone to whom the inside would have been distasteful. What really provoked the prosecutors was the adverse influence they supposed such a work would exercise on the religious belief of the masses, and therefore they were really making war on freedom of religious discussion, purposely choosing for attack a mode of expressing opinion from which serious freethinkers, like Mr. John

Morley, would be careful to dissociate themselves. As the result of a trial conducted with gratuitous harshness by Mr. Justice North, Mr. Foote and his two associates were sentenced to twelve, nine, and three months' imprisonment respectively. "The same judge, it is recorded, let off with three months' imprisonment a ruffian who had killed a coffee-stall keeper with a kick on the face when he was refused a second cup of coffee until the first had been paid for."[1]

While undergoing his sentence Mr. Foote was prosecuted on another charge of blasphemy before a judge of a very different character from North, Lord Chief Justice Coleridge. In charging the jury, Coleridge demolished the old fallacy that Christianity is part of the common law, in any sense that would make the denial or the derision of its doctrines a crime independently of special legislation; besides expressing a general disapprobation of all religious persecution in a way that seemed to cover the particular charge brought before him. On this occasion the jury disagreed, and the prosecution was dropped.[2]

The attacks on Mr. Foote seem to have grown out of the conflict with Bradlaugh, whom it was hoped to implicate in the same charge of blasphemy, and thus to disable from continuing the fight for his seat. Ultimately, the affair resulted in a great extension of religious liberty, and this was brought about in a characteristically English fashion, by making a scene, or, rather, a succession of scenes.

[1] J. M. Robertson, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 326.

[2] Robertson, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 333; H. Paul, *Modern England*, vol. iv., p. 307.

Plimsoll had compelled Parliament to give its serious attention to the grievances of sailors in merchantmen by a more extreme application of the same method ; and we shall now see how a group of Irishmen brought Home Rule into the first line of political interests by making themselves a nuisance to the House of Commons.

Isaac Butt, who had both created the Home Rule party and led it till his death in 1879, never advanced the cause one single step by the methods of eloquence, reason, and moderation. In 1875 he was joined by a young Irish Protestant squire of little education or rhetorical skill, but of supreme practical ability—Charles Stewart Parnell. The new member belonged to a type most unlike the conventional Irishman of English imagination, but represented more largely among the higher classes of Ireland than among the higher classes of England. Taciturn, imperious, unscrupulous, quick to form resolutions and patient in carrying them out—above all, looking to things, not to words—Parnell had read very few books in his life ; but one of those he did read, Froude's *English in Ireland,* had impressed him with a conviction, hardly anticipated by its brilliant author, that the English were incapable of governing his countrymen. A profound study of Parliamentary tactics suggested a way of obtaining their consent to the separation of the two islands—which was to make it impossible for the English to govern themselves. Obstruction under various forms had long been a familiar Parliamentary device for preventing the passage of measures that were sure to be carried

if they were put to a direct vote. But Parnell was the first to elaborate it into an instrument for making all legislation next to impossible. His effective employment of obstruction under the Conservative Government served to advertise his more solid qualities, and thus lifted him into a position of unquestioned supremacy among the Irish Nationalists, not only in Parliament, but all over the world. In Ireland he became President of the Land League, an association formed for the purpose of putting the tenants in possession of their holdings. An American tour enabled him to win over the Fenian organisation, and to secure a war treasure for the support of impecunious Home Rulers at Westminster. Soon after the meeting of the new Parliament he was elected Chairman of the Home Rule party, whose votes he henceforth directed with consummate judgment and inflexible determination.

As if to complete the distraction of Parliament, a Fourth party next presented itself on the scene. It never included above four members—Lord Randolph Churchill, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, the present Sir John Gorst, and Mr. Arthur Balfour; but all four were of distinguished, and two of first-rate, ability. It may be said that the group owed its existence as such to the energy of Sir H. Drummond Wolff in protesting against Bradlaugh's admission to be sworn, and to the weakness of the Speaker in tolerating his intervention. But the lead was soon taken and kept by Lord Randolph Churchill, who made himself conspicuous by the violence of his attacks on

Bradlaugh, and indeed on all who supported the Affirmation Bill, describing them as "the scum of the population." Mr. Balfour, destined afterwards to supersede Lord Randolph in the competition for the future leadership of the Conservative party, professes that sort of religious intolerance which consists in denying the consistency of morality with theological unbelief. If Atheists behave morally, it is, according to him, because they have been brought up in a Christian society and remain permeated by its influence all their lives. Holding such views, he naturally wishes that a dogmatic education should be provided at the public expense for the greatest possible number of children.

For the rest, the Fourth party were distinguished from the main body of Conservatives by their methods rather than by their principles. To miss no opportunity of attacking the Government, and more particularly its illustrious chief, to urge on the official leaders of the Opposition, or to set them an example of factious procedure with a view to taking their places at the next division of the spoils, and, generally speaking, to get themselves talked about—such was the policy, partly copied from Parnell, which alone gave them the standing of a separate Parliamentary group. Their leader, Randolph Churchill, called himself a Tory Democrat. He certainly succeeded, by the employment of demagogic arts, in making himself popular with, or rather interesting to, the masses ; and even before the electoral discomfiture of Beaconsfield's foreign policy he had the merit of privately siding with Gladstone on the Eastern Question. He also favoured a wide extension of

the suffrage, and was prepared, in a rather indefinite way, to govern Ireland according to Irish ideas. Like many others, he looked to a revival of Protectionism under the specious title of Fair Trade as a remedy for England's declining commercial prosperity during the eighties, but advantageously distinguished himself from other Tory Democrats by a timely return to rational economics. Holding so much in common with the Liberals, it may be asked why he never joined their ranks. We can only answer that, as he first blazed into notoriety on the religious question, so a community of religious tradition kept him in touch with the electric main of Toryism when every other strand in the cord connecting him with his party had broken. And perhaps this may be taken for a sign that in the near future differences about the unseen world will more and more determine the lines of party division for Englishmen, as they already determine them for Frenchmen and Italians.

Irish discontent was not in 1880, as it had been twelve years before, the question on which the new Ministry had come into Office; but now, as under Earl Grey, it rapidly overspread the whole political horizon, throwing every other interest into the shade and tending to break the Liberal majority to pieces.

Reactionists taunted Gladstone with having failed to conciliate Ireland by his sacrifice of Protestant ascendancy. But Disestablishment, apart from its other advantages, had the merit of bringing the Land question full into view. As has been observed in a former chapter, religious differences

only masked the real evil, which was that the mass of Irish cultivators, less privileged than Egyptian Fellahin, could be removed from their holdings at the pleasure of landlords mostly belonging to a foreign race. We saw how Bright, following Mill, wished to convert them into peasant proprietors, and how, at Bright's suggestion, a slight attempt in that direction was made by the legislation of 1870. As it happened, however, subsequent developments took their start, not from the Purchase Clauses in the Land Act of that year, but from the provision of Compensation for Disturbance. Tenants who were evicted for not paying their rent received no benefit from this arrangement; and the prevailing agricultural distress, by multiplying the number of such insolvent debtors, gave harsh landlords a welcome opportunity for clearing them off their estates without expense. In the opinion of many besides the evicted tenants themselves, their inability to pay arose from excessive rents, difficult to find in the best times and impossible in the worst. To carry out the evictions military force was needed, involving conflicts between the soldiery and the mob, and leading, in some instances, after the eviction had been accomplished, to the murder of the landlord, of his agent, or of the incoming tenant. Then, when persons accused on vehement presumption of committing such murders were put on their trial, witnesses could hardly be induced to come forward against them or juries to convict.

These things had been the invariable accompaniment of Irish distress at other periods; the present agitation brought into existence a new terror before

unknown, or practised, if at all, on a much smaller scale. It consisted in refusing to do any service, paid or unpaid, for those who had offended the tenant interest, and were marked out by it for social excommunication. From its first victim, a certain Captain Boycott, an Englishman who acted as agent for Lord Earne's estate in County Mayo, this method has received the name, which has since passed from English into other languages, of "boycotting." Auguste Comte, in his social philosophy—which is, to a great extent, a romantic resuscitation of mediæval practices under modern forms—recommends the Catholic system of excommunication as a means of bringing moral pressure to bear on malefactors who manage to keep outside the grasp of the criminal law;[1] and George Eliot has illustrated the working of the principle in *Middlemarch* by Caleb Garth's refusal to remain in the employment of a rich man whom he suspects of doing something equivalent to murder. But Comte proposed that the boycott—to use its modern name—should be exercised only at the suggestion of a responsible priesthood, and should never be pushed to physical violence. Irish boycotting observed no such restriction, and rapidly degenerated into violence of the worst description. Parnell, who introduced it into the methods of the Land League, recommended that tenants taking farms whence their predecessors had been evicted should be treated as moral lepers, and left severely alone. But the victims of boycotting, as actually practised, were not left alone. They were threat-

[1] Comte, *Politique Positive,* vol. ii., p. 418; vol. iv., p. 335.

ened, hooted, mobbed, marked out for outrage and murder. Nor was this the worst. By a peculiarly atrocious aggravation the whole family of the offending or obnoxious person was involved in the persecution, and those who disobeyed the interdict by rendering any service to its victims were themselves boycotted also. If they entered a place of worship, it was deserted ; if they fell ill, medical aid was forcibly withheld.

Professor Thorold Rogers, the Radical political economist, justly denounced boycotting as un-Christian ; but that it should be practised, without rebuke from their priesthood, by the most Christian people in Europe seems to have excited no surprise.

Pending the preparation of their Land Bill, the Liberal Government proposed to meet the situation by a provisional Bill extending the payment of compensation for disturbance to tenants who should be evicted for non-payment of rent, where the inability to pay was the consequence of bad harvests alone.[1] In the Commons twenty Liberals voted against the Bill and fifty more abstained. It failed to pass the House of Lords, and would have failed had none but Liberal Peers voted on the second reading.

Next year (1881) the Government introduced and carried a measure which still forms the basis of Irish agrarian legislation. It embodied the principle of what are called the three F's—Fair Rent, Fixed Tenure, and Free Sale. What constituted a fair rent was to be decided by a Commission appointed for the purpose, and was to remain fixed

[1] H. Paul, *Modern England,* vol. iv., p. 164.

for fifteen years. So long as the tenant paid his judicial rent he could not be disturbed ; and, on a change of tenancy, he could sell his interest to his successor.

This amount of State interference with private contract was attacked by some persons as against the principles of Political Economy. They might as well have said that it was against the principles of astronomy to light fires in winter, or to ice one's drinks in summer. Their mistake was to overlook the difference between a science and an art. It is not the business of an economist as such to prescribe systems of land tenure, although he may supply information without which they cannot be usefully constructed. By combined observation and reasoning he may tell what system in given circumstances enables the largest produce to be extracted, for a continuance, from the soil. In this particular instance it does not seem to have been contended that the produce of Irish estates would be diminished by applying the three F's. Supposing it to be diminished, the loss might be more than compensated by the creation of a thriving peasantry. It was said that capital would not be laid out on improvements in a country where the rights of landlords were so little regarded. But capital was unlikely to seek a country where the collection of rents had become so dangerous. And to say that rents should be collected by military force was not a sufficient answer. Such a system of executing the law will not work, for the simple reason that it is too expensive. A saying much quoted at this time, that "force is no remedy," called forth a good deal of ridicule. On what, it

was asked, does all government rest if not on force? What other guarantee have we against the enemies of society? But government is neither an abstraction nor a celestial visitant armed with supernatural terrors. It rests on public opinion, and disposes of no more power than what opinion allows it to be supplied with. What were called the rights of property in Ireland merely expressed a state of opinion that was rapidly ceasing to exist.

Legislation in restraint of free contract was not limited to Ireland. In England also old ideas about leaving people to bargain for themselves underwent a certain modification. The elections of 1880 showed that Liberalism was making progress in the counties, long the stronghold of Toryism. As a recompense for this partial adhesion the Malt Tax was repealed, to the great joy of the landed interest in general; but the tenant farmers were still more gratified by a Bill enabling them to shoot hares and rabbits on the land they occupied. Hitherto the landlords had reserved for their own exclusive privilege the rather childish occupation of shooting these mischievous animals for amusement, with the result that a large stock of valuable food was annually sacrificed to their maintenance. It seems strange that at a time when the demand for good tenants exceeded the supply farmers should still find themselves unable to arrange by private contract for liberty to shoot or trap the depredators of their property; and that not only should this right have to be secured to them by statute, but that they should be precluded by statute from contracting themselves out of it. In

reality, however, freedom of contract rather gained than lost by the intervention of the Legislature. For Parliament became an agency by which the tenant farmers were able to bargain on more equal terms with the landlords; while the mass of the people reasserted their equitable claim to limit the rights of landed property in such a way that they should not be so abused as to diminish the food supply of the country.

A still more important advance was made in protecting those who could not protect themselves by the Employers' Liability Act of 1880. Hitherto employers of labour had been only liable to pay damages for injuries inflicted on outsiders through the negligence of their workmen; workmen injured by each other's negligence had no remedy against their common employer. For several years the Trade Unions had sought to remove this grievance by legislation, but in vain. Apparently, it did not interest those devoted friends of the people, Disraeli and Lord John Manners. At last, "through the pertinacity of Mr. Broadhurst [a Labour member] a partial reform was obtained from Mr. Gladstone's Government in 1880, in spite of the furious opposition of the great employers of labour sitting on both sides of the House." Employers were made liable for accidents caused by those to whom they had delegated their authority, such as foremen and superintendents. Workpeople might contract themselves out of the Act. "In the vast majority of cases," however, they were not induced to do so. As a consequence, we may suppose, of this increased responsibility the relative number of accidents has diminished. "Whereas in 1877 1 railway employee

in 95 was more or less injured, in 1889 the proportion was only 1 in 195. Whereas between 1873 and 1880 1 coalminer in 446 met his death annually, between 1881 and 1890 the proportion was only 1 in 519."[1]

"In 1893–94 [under a Liberal Government] a further amending Bill passed the House of Commons which swept away the doctrine of common employment and placed the workman with regard to compensation on the same footing as any other person. A clause making void any agreement whereby a workman forewent his right of action was rejected by the House of Lords, and the Bill was thereupon abandoned."[2] So far, Tory democracy does not seem to have been very active on behalf of its clients. But in 1897 it woke up. "The Workmen's Compensation Act of that year introduced into the law the new principle that an employer must, subject to certain limitations, insure his workmen against the risks of their employment. At the same time, the right of a workman to bargain away his claim to compensation was in reality, though not in form, nullified, since any contract whereby he foregoes the right to compensation secured him by the Workmen's Compensation Act is effective only where a general scheme for compensation agreed upon between the employer and the employed secures to the workmen benefits at least as great as those which they would derive from the Compensation Acts; and this arrangement must be sanctioned by a State official."[3] The

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism,* pp. 351–52.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] A. V. Dicey, *Law and Opinion in England,* p. 282.

principle of liability for compensation has still more recently been extended to domestic servants by a Liberal House of Commons.

Thus, after a long delay, a principle first enunciated by Bentham's most trusted disciple, Edwin Chadwick,[1] and fully consistent with Bentham's philosophy, has been carried out.

Finally, in 1880, Mundella's Education Act completed the provision for securing the school attendance of working men's children by making it a duty imperative on the various local bodies commissioned for the purpose to exercise the powers of compulsion they already possessed. In 1891 elementary education was also made completely free, and this seems a logical consequence of making it compulsory, not because the State imposes a duty on the parents which they may or may not recognise, but because it deprives them of the addition to their income formerly provided by the compulsory labour of their children ; so that, were the children fed and even clothed at the expense of the community, their parents would not be in a better position than before. In this connection, let me again recall the fact that three Benthamites—Roebuck, George Grote, and Sir William Molesworth—were strong supporters of State education ; a proof, among others, that philosophical Radicalism was more consistent with itself through the whole nineteenth century than any other political school of the same duration.

Compulsion has secured the objects its promoters had in view. "It was calculated that in 1870 a

[1] *Dictionary of National Biography,* Supplement, vol. i., p. 407.

million and a half of children were receiving a fairly efficient education."[1] In 1882 the average attendance had risen to three millions, of whom two millions were accounted for by the Voluntary schools.[2] In 1895 these showed an increase of half a million, and the Board-schools of nearly a million.[3] In 1905 the total attendance for England and Wales was five millions and a quarter.[4]

Before reviewing the foreign policy and the Irish administrative policy of Gladstone's Government it will be convenient to say something about his last great legislative achievement, the provisional completion of Parliamentary Reform by the extension of Household Suffrage to the counties in 1884. For ten years previously this had been part of the Liberal programme, and resolutions for carrying it into effect were annually moved by the present Sir George Trevelyan in the Conservative House of Commons. In principle the Tories were not ostensibly opposed to the enfranchisement of the rural householder. "I have not the slightest doubt," said Disraeli, "that he possesses all those virtues which generally characterise the British people," and is as well qualified to vote as the town householder.[5] Being, however, a Conservative as well as a Tory, he thought it more important to keep our electoral system unchanged than to give the cottagers an opportunity for bringing their virtues to bear on the choice of Parliamentary

[1] Craik, *The State in its Relation to Education,* p. 119.
[2] *Ibid,* p. 130. [3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Whitaker's Almanack* for 1907, p. 268.
[5] Kebbel, *History of Toryism,* p. 371.

representatives. In fact, whatever Tory Democrats might say, the unenfranchised labourers were more likely to look on the Liberals, and especially on the party led by Gladstone, as their real friends; so that another Reform Bill could hardly fail to benefit that party.

A Bill for the extension of Household Suffrage to the counties involved such a vast increase in the number of rural voters as logically to necessitate a sweeping redistribution of seats. As in 1866, Gladstone considered it advisable to separate the two measures, putting franchise first. On that occasion his tactics had resulted in the division of his party and the wreck of his Government. This time—thanks, perhaps, to the Caucus—more perfect discipline prevailed, and his County Suffrage Bill passed the Commons by a large majority. But it was thrown out by the Lords, whose opposition gave rise to a great agitation for such a reform in the constitution of the upper House as would incapacitate it from permanently thwarting the popular will.

It cannot, however, be denied that on the question immediately at issue the Peers had a strong case. What they, or rather the Conservative leaders who represented them, maintained was that, as the strength of the Conservative party lay in the counties, and as they would probably lose a number of county seats under Household Suffrage, they could not be expected to give the Liberals this advantage except at the price of a considerable addition to the county representation as a whole, with a corresponding diminution of the seats assigned to the boroughs. And not only had the

Peers a good case, but they had also a strong position. For, practically, no change could be made in the constitution of the Upper House without an appeal to the people; and, under the existing electoral law, such an appeal might well have resulted in the return of a Conservative majority.

Thanks partly to the Queen's intervention, a way was found out of the deadlock. The leaders on both sides met and arranged a scheme of redistribution by which the counties gained so many seats as actually to return more than half the members for England and Wales, instead of something under two-fifths as before. The result of their private deliberations was obediently accepted by their followers on both sides, and the two Bills, for Franchise and Redistribution, passed into law before the end of 1884.

As it happened, the great increase in the number of county seats redounded entirely to the benefit of the Liberals, and saved them from a crushing defeat at the next General Election, which revealed the fact that Conservatism had been making extraordinary progress in the great cities, especially London, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, and Sheffield, where the Liberals had confidently reckoned on carrying from two-thirds to three-fourths of the seats.[1] In Ireland also the loss to Liberalism under the new franchise was great, the vast majority of members returned being Parnellites and the remainder Conservatives.

[1] *The Radical Programme,* pp. 5–6. Instead of fifteen Tories, as the writer expected, London sent up thirty-seven (*The Political History of England,* 1837–1901, p. 371).

In order to explain the great loss of popularity suffered by the Liberals during their five years' tenure of office, we have now to pass briefly in review the foreign, colonial, and Irish policy of Gladstone's Government.

With regard to the Eastern Question, Gladstone, as might be expected, assumed an attitude markedly contrasting with that of his predecessor. As a reward for their heroic exertions in the recent war, it had been agreed that the Montenegrins should receive an accession of territory at Turkey's expense. But the Porte was in no hurry to make the required cessions until a naval demonstration of the Powers, organised by England, compelled it to yield. Europe had also recommended the cession of Thessaly and Epirus to Greece, but rather as a pious wish than as a command. In 1881 Gladstone again brought pressure to bear at Constantinople, with so much effect that about seven-tenths of the territory in question was added to the Hellenic kingdom.

It has already been mentioned how, by a righteous reversal of Lytton's policy, Candahar was re-united to Cabul. To undo the mischief wrought by the late Government in South Africa proved a harder task. Gladstone, in his electoral campaign, had very properly denounced the annexation of the Transvaal as an attack on freedom; but after taking office he showed no inclination to give back the Boers their independence, although the Radical section of his Cabinet desired it. Sir Owen Lanyon, a British officer charged with the administration of the Transvaal, described the Boers, in language recalling that which had been used of

the Yankees a little over a century earlier, as "mortal cowards."[1] Five days after he wrote those words the Boers were besieging him in Pretoria, and the whole country was up in arms. Upon this our authorities began to treat. While negotiations were still pending 200 Boers attacked and destroyed a small British force at Majuba Hill, the British general, Sir George Colley, falling in the fight. Many people at home, animated with a spirit like Cetywayo's, thought that we should have avenged this defeat before letting the Transvaal go; but fortunately the Prime Minister was not among the number. The peace negotiations were concluded, and a Convention, made in 1884, recognised the South African Republic as an independent State, subject to the veto of the British Crown on any treaty it might make with a foreign Power except the Orange Free State. It was also stipulated that "white men were not to be excluded from living or trading in any part of the Republic, nor to be taxed more heavily than native burghers."[2] At that time the gold mines had not been opened, nor was any value attached to the possession of the country, except in so far as its independence might endanger our hold on the Cape, so cherished as a link in the long chain of our communications with India.

The safety of India supplies the key to our whole foreign policy during the nineteenth century, except that which was inspired by sympathy with the struggles of other nations for freedom. Indian

[1] H. Paul, *Modern England*, vol. iv., p. 195.
[2] *Ibid*, pp. 193–202, 323.

interests were responsible for Beaconsfield's attitude towards Turkey and Afghanistan, as well as for his purchase of the Suez Canal shares. Nominally in the interest of the bondholders, but really from mutual jealousy, in order that neither might acquire a position of exclusive predominance, England and France established a joint control over the finances of Egypt, reducing the authority of the Khedive to a shadow. Impatient at this tutelage, Ismail dismissed the Controllers in 1879. Thereupon the two Powers, with the Sultan's consent, promptly deposed the old tyrant, replacing him by his son Tewfik.

On his way into exile Ismail exclaimed: "I leave my country as a Schleswig-Holstein to England and France!" His prophecy has not been fulfilled. Two years afterwards a military mutiny, headed by the misguided patriot Arâbi Pasha, led to the temporary deposition of Tewfik and the release of Egypt from foreign domination. A massacre of the European residents in Alexandria (June, 1881) left no alternative but armed intervention. France, made prudent by the terrible experiences of 1870, refused to take part in the restoration of order by military force. After a vain appeal for co-operation to Italy, England undertook the task alone. Remodelled by a democratic Government and led by a democratic general, Sir Garnet Wolseley, our army did its work with admirable efficiency and promptness, defeating Arâbi and entering Cairo before the end of the summer. France retained her financial rights, and has ever since continued to exercise them hurtfully for Egypt in the interest of a capitalist ring; but, politically, the dual control

came to an end. Against the intentions of the Ministers who sent out the expedition, a virtual English Protectorate has since been established in Egypt, thereby securing the alternative route to India.

Before long, however, new and almost insuperable difficulties arose out of what seemed such an easy conquest. With the help of English officers Ismail had built up a huge Sudanese empire, containing ten millions of inhabitants and extending from the Nubian frontier to the great lakes of Central Africa. As recent converts to Islam, the Sudanese were animated by a spirit of passionate religious fanaticism. Content to obey a Mohammedan ruler at Cairo, they revolted against his infidel successors. Under the guidance of a prophet known as the Mahdi, whose career recalls the legendary exploits of a Moses or a Samuel, they attacked and surrounded the Egyptian garrison, scattered in helpless isolation over a vast extent of inland territory. An Egyptian army sent to relieve the garrisons under Hicks Pasha, an English officer in the service of the Khedive, fell into an ambuscade and was annihilated, the commander himself being among the slain.

Hitherto the English Government had disclaimed all responsibility for what Tewfik chose to do or not to do beyond the southern frontier of Egypt. It was his business to maintain or to withdraw the garrisons as he pleased. Finally, under pressure of public opinion, orders were sent from London for the evacuation of the Sudan. At the suggestion of an impulsive newspaper editor, the perilous mission of bringing off the besieged garrisons was

entrusted to an impulsive mystic, General Gordon. As a young man Gordon had crushed a formidable rebellion against the Emperor of China. In middle life he had done more than any other man to establish Egyptian dominion in Central Africa, using his authority to suppress the slave trade. What he might now have done had his advice been accepted or adequate support sent out in response to his urgent messages from Khartoum, we do not know. As it was, he held out for ten months against overwhelming odds. An expedition sent to relieve him arrived too late. Hearing of its approach, the Mahdi delivered his final assault on January 26th, 1885. Khartoum fell, and Gordon, who had been believed, perhaps believed himself, to bear a charmed life, was among the slain.

Before England had recovered from her indignation, and Gladstone's Government from the discredit of what Randolph Churchill called the abandonment of the Christian hero, war with Russia seemed close at hand. It had been arranged that the frontier between Afghanistan and Russian Turkestan should be drawn by a joint Commission acting on behalf of the two interested Powers. While the delimitation was still in progress the Afghans occupied a place called Penjdeh, of which Russia claimed to be the legitimate owner. Without waiting for the Commission's award, the Russians attacked and drove them out of it with much loss of life. Such, at least, was the account received and credited in England, with the result that serious preparations for war were begun. On the other hand, it was maintained by the Russian

authorities, not without some support in the English Press, that the Afghans had been the aggressors and had brought their fate on themselves. At first the two Governments agreed to submit the question to arbitration, but afterwards preferred arranging it by direct negotiation. Penjdeh remained Russian, and no more was heard of the alleged outrage on our Afghan allies. Its historic effect was to lower England in the eyes of Europe and the Liberal Cabinet in the eyes of England, although their rivals would have been even less inclined to make war for such a quarrel.

Gladstone and his Government were still more unfortunate in their relations with disorder in Ireland than with disorder in Africa and Asia. Their provisional settlement of the agrarian question only brought the Nationalist question more fully into view. They prosecuted Parnell on a charge of seditious conspiracy, but failed to satisfy a Dublin jury of his guilt. Then, taking advantage of the exceptional powers conferred on them by the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, they imprisoned him without a trial. The only apparent result was a fresh epidemic of agrarian outrages. Parnell, on his side, soon got tired of being in prison, and promised, if he were let out, to co-operate with the Government in passing Liberal measures. He was, in fact, set free after a short detention, but not, as would appear, on the strength of his promise, which proved rather embarrassing than otherwise to those who were to benefit by it, and whom public opinion now accused of leaning for support on a rebel and a traitor.

Anyhow, a more gracious treatment of Ireland was in contemplation. W. E. Forster, Gladstone's Irish Secretary, had given much offence to Irish susceptibilities by his unconciliatory manners and roughly repressive administration. His position gradually became untenable, and on May 2nd, 1882, he resigned. Four days afterwards his successor, Lord Frederick Cavendish, Lord Hartington's brother, was murdered in the Phœnix Park, Dublin, with his Under Secretary, T. H. Burke. There had been no intention of killing Lord Frederick; he lost his life in a vain attempt to interfere between the assassins and Burke, their destined victim. But if the new Chief Secretary fell by accident, his predecessor Forster and the Viceroy, Lord Cowper, only escaped by accident, for the original plot had been directed against them as well as against Burke.[1] In England many people looked on the crime as the natural result of making any concessions to Irish demands. A new Coercion Bill was rushed through Parliament, followed, it is true, by a Bill relieving tenants from the arrears of rent, with partial compensation to the landlords from the unspent Irish Church Fund. Meanwhile, agrarian outrage and murder continued to rage with greater virulence than before; and Nationalist emissaries from America exploded parcels of dynamite in the public buildings of London. A number of criminals, including the Phœnix Park murderers, were discovered and punished; but this did not promote a better feeling between England and Ireland.

[1] H. Paul, *Modern England*, vol. iv., p. 293.

In the face of such difficulties and disasters it is a marvel that Gladstone's Government should last so long and achieve so much both at home and abroad. What finally brought about their fall was a proposed increase of taxation necessitated by the Sudanese and Afghan muddles. Their new imposts threatened the public-house interest, which, as usual, found staunch support on the Tory benches. An understanding with the Conservative chiefs that, if they came into office, the Coercion Act of 1882 should not be renewed secured Parnell's support. The great Ministry fell by a majority of 12 (June, 1885). So many Liberals were absent unpaired as to give the idea that the leaders rode for a fall.

Lord Salisbury came into office with a Ministry of caretakers, including Lord Randolph Churchill as its most conspicuous member. In the autumn a General Election took place with an electorate five million strong, of whom three million belonged to the working classes. Voting began, as usual, in the boroughs, and there the Conservatives won a series of unexpected successes, with the help of the Irish vote, which the Nationalist leaders had directed to be thrown on their side, or rather against the Liberals, whom they had now come to regard with deadly hatred. But the newly-enfranchised agricultural labourer broke away from the squire and the parson, turning the scale against Conservatism to such an extent that only 249 supporters of Lord Salisbury were returned. The final result was a deadlock; for the Parnellites numbered 86, and were these to combine with the 249 Conservatives—as they certainly would at the first opportunity, in order to make all government

impossible — their united forces would exactly balance the Liberal strength, which only amounted to 335 in a House of 670 members.

In such circumstances the Liberal leader had to choose between Home Rule, against which he had lately declared, as the price of the Irish vote, and exclusion from office until the next General Election, if not for the rest of his life. He chose Home Rule, with what ruinous consequences to his party the next chapter will show.

Chapter XVIII.

TANGLED ISSUES

When the new Parliament met, in January, 1886, Gladstone had already declared for Home Rule. He soon found himself in a position to ascertain how far his old political associates were prepared to join in his change of front. Defeated on an Amendment to the Address by a coalition of Liberals and Parnellites, Lord Salisbury resigned, and was succeeded by the aged statesman whose place he had taken little more than seven months previously. The new Cabinet were agreed on the principle that a certain measure of self-government should be granted to Ireland. This, however, was going further than some of Gladstone's late colleagues were prepared to follow. Sir Henry James, the greatest Parliamentary lawyer in the Liberal party, refused the Lord Chancellorship rather than support Home Rule in any form. For the same reason Lord Hartington would not return to office, as neither would Lord Derby, who had left the Conservatives—he never was a Tory—to join Gladstone a few years before. Lord Selborne, Mr. Goschen, and John Bright, who had all formerly held high office under the same chief, also offered an uncompromising opposition to the new departure. Bright's name carried the highest authority of all, from his long championship of the

Irish cause and the absolute sincerity of his political convictions.

More calamitous still was the loss of two Ministers, Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Trevelyan, who resigned when Gladstone's Home Rule Bill was laid before the Cabinet. Mr. Chamberlain had hitherto been known as the most advanced of the official Liberals, even standing sponsor to a recently-published "Radical Programme"; and many looked up to him as the future leader of the party. Mr. Trevelyan's talent was literary rather than oratorical; but he also had been named among possible future Premiers; he had two years' experience of Ireland as Chief Secretary; and, above all, his reputation for honesty was of the highest. It augured ill for any measure that these men could not accept it.

The Home Rule Bill proposed to give Ireland a Parliament of her own, with an Executive responsible to it alone. It was known that an Irish House of Commons, if left to itself, would imitate the British Colonies in establishing Protection; accordingly, provision was made that it should not meddle with trade. It was known that the priests, if they were permitted, would use their influence to procure a large endowment for the Roman Catholic Church from the Dublin Parliament; accordingly, endowments to any religious community were forbidden. It was known that the gift of Home Rule without the power of confiscating land-rents to any extent would be derisory; therefore, it was arranged that provision should be made in a separate Bill for buying out such landlords as would not trust the new Legislature to protect their

rights, the purchase money to be raised on the credit of the imperial exchequer.

The Home Rule Bill was defeated on the second reading by a majority of thirty, ninety-three Liberals voting against it (June 7th). Gladstone dissolved, as he had a perfect right to do, for with such a division of parties no Government was possible. The constituencies returned a decisive answer. Gladstone's Liberal opponents—or, as they were now called, the Liberal Unionists—lost fifteen seats, but the Conservatives gained sixty-seven, thus nearly quadrupling the majority against Home Rule. For the third time in little over a year there was a change of Ministers, Lord Salisbury resuming the Premiership, with Lord Randolph Churchill for his second in command. But the victory had really been won by the Liberal Unionists, and, above all others, by Mr. Goschen, who became Chancellor of the Exchequer on Lord Randolph's resignation and political eclipse in the following December. In after years, as First Lord of the Admiralty, this distinguished statesman took a leading part in that great work of naval reconstruction which has made our fleet superior to any hostile combination ever likely to be put in line against it. Lord Goschen—to give him his present title—is the son of German parents, and is clearly filled with that intense patriotism, comparable to the enthusiasm of converts, which so often animates the children of foreign settlers towards their adopted country, and which is everywhere noticeable among European Jews.

Gladstone had sincerely desired that Home Rule

should not be treated as a party question; and he had offered to co-operate with Lord Salisbury in bringing about a settlement of it by the Conservative Ministry. But that such an idea should have occurred to him as feasible shows with how much ignorance of the world the world may be governed. What misled him on this occasion was probably the success of his negotiations the year before with the Conservative leaders on the details of the Redistribution Bill. But the two cases offered no parallel, for it was precisely on the details, not on the principle, of popular representation that disagreements existed. With Home Rule the principle was everything; and Conservatism might as well have ceased to exist as accept it. Irish autonomy meant a fundamental change in the Constitution; a personal offence to the Queen, who hated it; a measure, more or less, of confiscation; a danger to Protestantism; an apparent triumph to the enemies of England. Justice, freedom, nationality, were the leading ideas invoked on behalf of the new departure; but these had long been watchwords of Liberalism. They might appeal to individual Conservatives like Lord Carnarvon, whom a brief residence in Dublin as Viceroy had converted to Home Rule; to the mass of the party they stood for that particular kind of canting sentiment which is used as a cloak for selfish ambition.

Nor was this all. Apart from principle, and considered merely from the Parliamentary point of view, Liberalism had everything to gain, Toryism everything to lose, by a scheme of Home Rule which would exclude the Irish members from the House of Commons. It meant the speedy return

of Gladstone to power with a solid majority of 112 at his back, relieved from the Bradlaugh question, relieved from Parnellite obstruction, relieved from the Fourth Party, installed for the rest of his active life as omnipotent dictator of Great Britain. On the other hand, before Parliament met it was already evident to Lord Salisbury, as to the whole world, that a considerable section of the Liberal party would abandon their leader on the Irish question and coalesce with the Conservatives, thus giving them a majority in the whole House.

Many thought at the time, and many perhaps still think, that Home Rule was imposed on the Liberal party by the will of its chief. If we understand this to mean that it was accepted without enthusiasm, the notion is not true. It would rather seem that the great majority of Liberals were already leaning that way, and were only waiting for a signal from the leader to declare their conversion. It is no proof to the contrary that eight Liberal Unionists out of nine retained their seats, and that they formed a larger proportion of the party in the Parliament of 1886 than in the Parliament of 1885. For, by an agreement between the Unionist leaders, Liberal candidates who had voted against Home Rule were supported by the Conservatives in nearly every contested election; and many were old favourites whose personal popularity made it hopeless for a Home Ruler to be run against them. By the nature of the case these men, being advanced in life, were the first to drop off, and their seats, as they fell vacant, were generally filled up by Gladstonian Liberals, thus giving rise to an

exaggerated impression that the country was coming round to Home Rule. On Gladstone himself the support of his party, which he confounded with the English working classes, acted as a powerful stimulant, converting what seems at first to have been a resolution adopted solely on grounds of expediency into an ethical conviction held and expressed with all the energy of his rich and passionate nature; while his fervid utterances, in their turn, communicated fresh enthusiasm to the followers, whose opinions he fed with an inexhaustible stream of argument and illustration.

Assuming that the masses were on his side, the new leader of the Home Rule party declared that in all the great political issues of the previous sixty years they had been right and the classes wrong. It was candid on his part to say so, for the clearest instance of such a correct judgment had been given in the case of the American War, when he himself had sided with the slave-holders against the majority of the English people; but he might have remembered how, in his youth, the masses were against Catholic Emancipation, which the classes, as represented by an unreformed House of Commons, had repeatedly approved. A still better evidence of fallibility is that the oracle does not always agree with itself. In three General Elections, coming sufficiently near together, a plebiscite has been practically taken on Home Rule. It was rejected in 1886, accepted in 1892, and rejected again in 1895.

Besides the masses, which have proved such an untrustworthy tribunal, Gladstone appealed to another and more select authority, the historians,

whom he claimed as supporters of Home Rule. But neither could this special jury agree on a verdict. Discounting politicians who write history, Froude, Lecky, Seeley, and Professor Goldwin Smith stood for the Union; Freeman, Gardiner, York Powell, and Mr. Oscar Browning for Home Rule.

On the other hand, a contemporary writer, himself holding advanced Liberal opinions, exaggerates when he says that the intellect of the country was against Home Rule.[1] There certainly was a preponderance of distinguished names on the Unionist side. Herbert Spencer, Tyndall, Huxley, Henry Sidgwick, James Martineau, Jowett, Fitzjames and Leslie Stephen, Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, Matthew Arnold, make up, with the historians already named, an imposing list; and in some ways every one of them was a Liberal. But against these we have to set, besides the Home Rule historians, Ruskin, Mr. George Meredith, Mr. Bryce, Mr. John Morley, Mr. Frederic Harrison, Professor Beesly, and, as a later accession, the present Sir George Trevelyan, who rejoined the Gladstonian Liberals on the removal of certain particulars to which he objected in the Home Rule Bill of 1886.

Turning from authority to reason, let us now consider the arguments by which the adhesions on either side were ultimately determined. Those in favour of Home Rule—besides the motives of political expediency already specified, which probably suggested Gladstone's scheme in the

[1] Mr. Herbert Paul, in *Modern England,* vol. v., p. 58.

first instance and won for it the adhesion of his party as a whole, in the hope of securing their Parliamentary position for another term of years—were the great Liberal ideas of nationality, justice, and freedom. Indeed, it is a principle admitted by the best English Conservatives, as well as by most Liberals, that nations are, on the whole, best governed by themselves—that is to say, by rulers of their own race and their own choice; and it was on this principle that the efforts of Greece, Belgium, Italy, Hungary, Poland, and the Balkan Peninsula had met with such ardent sympathy among Englishmen. Now, a century of agitation proved that the Irish people constituted a true nationality, visibly marked off as such by the natural frontier of the sea. Was it not, then, unjust and unreasonable to withhold from them what the Continental despots had been so severely censured for taking from the inhabitants of alien countries subjected, by conquest or inheritance, to their sway?

There is, however, another principle that sometimes meets and overbears the claim of a people to be free, and that is no other than the supreme law of self-preservation. It was invoked on this occasion by England just as it had been invoked, with the full approval of many advanced Liberals, by the majority of the American people against the pretension of the Slave States to set up an independent Confederacy, by the Swiss Protestant Cantons against the Sonderbund, and by the French Jacobins of 1793 against the real or supposed Girondist intention of substituting a loose federal tie for the one and indivisible Republic. It was,

and still is, alleged by Unionists that Irish independence would mean a breach of the bond which constitutes the integrity of the British Archipelago, and holds it together as a single State of the first order. Granting the existence of a steady movement towards the emancipation of nationalities in modern Europe, there is, they say, another movement towards the formation of great agglomerations, and this movement, whenever the two have collided, has proved the stronger, as in the examples already cited of Switzerland and America, to which may be added the attempted Federal Republic of Spain in 1873.

Again, Irish independence would mean more than the deduction of so much territory and population from the resources of Britain ; it would mean their addition to the resources of any Power with which we might at any time be at war. More especially, it would mean the conversion of an island only four hours' steam from England's shores into a permanent outpost of the United States, with its millions of American-Irish citizens in a state of permanent conspiracy for the destruction of England and her empire.

To these alarmist prophecies the English Home Rulers replied that there was no wish to break up the unity of the archipelago or of the empire : what Ireland wanted was not national independence, but autonomy, liberty to manage her own affairs in her own way. So much had been conceded, with the happiest results, to England's great transoceanic colonies ; and the same results might reasonably be expected to follow from Home Rule. Experience also showed that somewhat similar

arrangements had succeeded perfectly in the cases of Norway and Hungary, neither of which kingdoms wanted complete independence.

Unfortunately for the Liberal optimists, Parnell himself, addressing an American audience, had announced, in his own name and in the name of his friends, their intention of not resting until they had "destroyed the last link that keeps Ireland bound to England"; while Mr. Sexton, the most eloquent of the Nationalist orators, had proclaimed that between England and Ireland there never could be any feeling but the passion of hate. The history of their relations also seemed to show that every concession to Ireland had been used as leverage for gaining further concessions, Catholic Emancipation leading to the demand for Repeal, Disestablishment and agrarian legislation to obstruction and Home Rule. Colonial self-government could not be quoted as a precedent; for, in the first place, Canada and Australia were bound by the strongest motives of self-interest to keep up their connection with the mother country; and, in the next place, if they chose to separate, whatever the loss to her prestige, England's power would remain what it was before, or would even be increased by no longer having distant dependencies to defend. As for the European parallels, Norway, by severing the last link with Sweden, has turned the tables on Separatist logic; while Hungary has shown herself a permanent danger to the stability of the Austrian monarchy.

Besides the general presumption arising from the whole tenour of Irish agitation, there were particular reasons for believing that Home Rule

would be merely a stepping-stone to complete separation. Gladstone's scheme left Ireland with four formidable grievances, on any one of which a claim to complete independence might be based. It imposed on Ireland an amount of imperial taxation which Parnell declared to be much in excess of what was just. It withheld freedom to abolish Free Trade, a disability which Irish agitators might be trusted to represent as a tyrannous restriction imposed in the interests of English manufacturers. It forbade religious endowments; and, in view of the fact that the Protestant Church had retained a handsome share of its former wealth, the Roman Church might be expected to claim, on principles of elementary justice, a subsidy from the State of at least four times that amount—say thirty millions. Finally, the new Land Bill, tending to make the State the universal landlord, while it lowered rents considerably, transferred their collection from agencies that might be appeased or frightened to an inexorable and irresistible authority. All these grievances might, of course, be remedied with the consent of the English Parliament. But the very necessity of having to appeal at every step to an alien Legislature for leave to exercise a natural right would be resented as an intolerable humiliation by a people that had learned to look on itself as a nation among the nations of the world.

Such, stated on the broadest grounds of political expediency, was the Unionist case against Home Rule. Yet at that period there prevailed through all grades of English society, from the Heir

Apparent to the humblest peasant, and from the most reactionary Ritualist priest to the narrowest Nonconformist minister, such a passion for justice, and such hopeless weariness of the Irish incubus, that all these problematic perils might have been cheerfully faced in the confidence that England need only stretch out her invincible arm at any moment, if necessary, to take back her gift if it were abused—had justice and liberty only spoken with an undivided voice. What gave the situation such tragic poignancy, what shattered the higher Liberalism from crown to base, was the perplexity, the ambiguity, of those ideal guides. Liberal sympathies had gone out whole-heartedly to Italy, Hungary, and Poland, for there they were given to nations at unity with themselves. United Ireland only existed as the title of a violent party newspaper. It was claimed that a third of the Irish people, and *that* a third including far the larger share of Irish property, industry, intelligence, and enlightenment, looked with dismay on the prospect of being handed over to the control of an ignorant and ravenous populace, led partly by unscrupulous demagogues and partly by the most fanatical priesthood in Catholic Europe. Now, what priestly dictation meant had recently been shown in the English Parliament by the object-lesson of the Bradlaugh case. A Secularist member, himself Ireland's friend, had been forbidden either to affirm or to swear, because in division after division the scale had been turned against religious liberty by Home Rule—that is, Rome Rule—votes. A very intelligible anti-clericalism had perhaps something to do with the fact that, among English Rationalists,

Huxley, Froude, Professor Goldwin Smith, and Mr. Swinburne were Unionists, as were also the Irish Rationalists, Tyndall and Lecky, to whom may be added Professor Thomas Maguire, a Roman Catholic, but also a Hegelian, and therefore, presumably, a Modernist. Even assuming Irish Protestants to be as a rule no more liberal than Irish Catholics, it was no longer in their power to be intolerant, while under Home Rule they would be less able to defend themselves than the Catholics if, as many believed likely, they were to be attacked by such modern methods of persecution as boycotting. At any rate, the passionate hostility of Protestant Ulster to Home Rule, amounting to threats of civil war if it were granted, showed that revolt against an alien domination was a game that two could play at. And the prospect of having English troops called in to shoot down men whose only crime was their fidelity to England did not appeal to the imaginative sympathy of the English electorate.

Ulster could at least fight for independence from Celtic and Catholic control. The half million or so of Anglican Protestants scattered over the three other provinces would be left as sheep to the slaughter—a likely fate if it was thought that they stood between the ultra-Nationalists and the attainment of their final object, the severance of the last link that bound Ireland to England. Before risking such horrors, it might be as well to try what could be done by less heroic remedies than separation, to give the new agrarian legislation time to do its healing work; above all, to substitute steady execution of the law—what Lord Salisbury called

twenty years of resolute government—for a policy of alternate coercion and concession. O'Connell's Repeal agitation had collapsed ; the Young Ireland agitation had collapsed ; why should not Home Rule, when confronted by the same steady resistance, disappear into the same limbo of unrealised dreams ?

So evenly balanced were the arguments for and against Irish autonomy that the English democracy for a time let its decision hang on rather petty personal considerations. Charges of encouraging political assassination were brought against Parnell, and found, on inquiry, to rest on forged documents ; so people thought that, as a compensation, he ought to be allowed to lead a Parliament on College Green. Then he was so unfortunate as to be detected in an unlawful amour, and, being only an uncrowned king, had not authority enough to save himself from exposure in the Divorce Court. The English Home Rule Nonconformists, more squeamish than their adored leader, Gladstone, decided to boycott Home Rule unless it parted company with the only Irish politician capable of managing the Irish Nationalist representatives. These men had re-elected him to be their Chairman after the Divorce Court scandal, but they reversed their vote by a large majority in deference to the English Liberal sentence, and the mass of the Irish people, led by the Catholic hierarchy, followed suit. Parnell fought desperately for his position ; but the struggle broke down his health, and in less than a year he was dead.

Nine months afterwards a General Election

placed the Home Rule Liberals, with Gladstone at their head, in power (July, 1892). But their majority only amounted to forty-two; and without the Nationalist vote they would have been in a minority of somewhat more than that figure. In fact, the tide that ran so high after Parnell's vindication had been receding ever since his exposure in the Divorce Court, and had not been arrested by his death. When the General Election of 1892 took place the tide was, so to speak, half-way out; and this unsettled state of public opinion accounts for the small majority given to Home Rule by the whole kingdom, and to the Union by Great Britain.

A second Home Rule Bill was introduced in 1893. It differed from the Bill of 1886 in two important particulars. Ireland was still to be represented in the British Parliament; but her delegation was to be reduced from 103 to 80—that is to say, nearly as many as she would be entitled to in an imperial Parliament elected on the principle of strictly proportionate representation. And no provision was made for compensating the landlords who would certainly be dispossessed of their estates by a tenants' Parliament sitting in Dublin. A Land Purchase Act had, it is true, been passed by the Unionist Parliament; but it did not compel the present owners to sell their estates for whatever the occupiers might think fit to offer, nor was the capital provided large enough to go round if every landlord stood out for a fair price.

Such as it was, this Bill passed the Commons by a majority of thirty-four. Some Liberals are reported to have voted for it only because they

were sure that it would be kicked out by the Lords. And kicked out it was in the Upper House by a majority of more than ten to one. A more fatal blow to Home Rule was Gladstone's resignation next year. The Prime Minister was in his eighty-fifth year, and his senses were beginning to fail. But increasing years and infirmities only made him more and more the object of popular idolatry, so much so that his withdrawal from public life had the effect of alienating many from a cause which, but for his authority, they would never have embraced ; or rather it had the effect of making them more sensible to arguments which his authority had hitherto neutralised.

To complete the misfortunes of the Liberal party, Lord Rosebery was chosen to succeed Gladstone as Prime Minister over the head of Sir William Harcourt, by far the ablest and most successful of his colleagues. Harcourt was understood to have no liking for his new chief; nor, with Lord Rosebery's very tepid Liberalism, could any cordial co-operation between the two be expected. England does not love Cabinets that are divided against themselves ; and such was the weakness of the new Ministry that it fell in June, 1895, before a vote which really only concerned one of its members, the present Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. Lord Salisbury resumed office, this time in coalition with the leading Liberal Unionists, the Duke of Devonshire, Mr. Chamberlain, Sir Henry James, and Lord Lansdowne. His nephew, Mr. Arthur Balfour, who, as Irish Secretary, had won the highest reputation for administrative ability and debating skill, became Leader of the House of

Commons, with the prospective inheritance of the Premiership.

On an appeal to the people, the late Liberal Administration—decapitated, discredited, divided, and defeated—had no chance against so powerful and brilliant a band. With the lowest class of voters a less worthy motive than respect for intellectual superiority helped to swell the Unionist ranks. In response to a strong demand for Temperance legislation, Harcourt had introduced a Local Veto Bill, and, although it had to be dropped, the publicans and their clients took the alarm. Those who, like Archbishop Magee, would rather see England free than sober, combining with those who would rather see England drunk than rationally educated, rallied to the cry of Beer and the Bible. The result was a Unionist majority of three to one in England without Wales, and of 152 in the whole kingdom. For the first time since 1874 the Conservatives had a majority over all other parties combined.

The English Empire had been built up by isolated adventurers, with little help or countenance from the nation acting as a whole. Under the guidance of Mr. Chamberlain, the strongest personality in the new Cabinet, England now entered on a career of conscious, grandiose, not always scrupulous, self-assertion and territorial extension. An Egyptian army organised and commanded by English officers overthrew the Dervish host and reconquered the Sudan, constituting it, in a more peculiar sense than even Egypt, as a dependency of England. An attempt made by Frenchmen to

seize a derelict portion of territory formerly subject to the Khedive was abandoned under the menace of our irresistible sea-power. The Transvaal, after a struggle more glorious to the Boers than to ourselves, was re-annexed, the Orange Free State sharing its fate. Russia, our only formidable rival in Asia, saw her armies and fleets destroyed by England's ally, Japan, with whom we have since become more closely linked by a treaty of mutual guarantees.

In order to maintain their majority intact, the Unionist Government, against all precedent, dissolved Parliament in 1900, while the South African War was still in progress. They retained office with a slightly increased majority, but with no more special mandate than to fight until the Boer Republics were subdued. Success proved ruinous to themselves and to their party, which now threw over every pretence of holding Liberal, or even Conservative, principles. In 1902 Mr. Balfour passed a new Education Bill abolishing School Boards and throwing Voluntary schools, which were chiefly Church schools, on the rates—a proposal that even in 1870 had to be withdrawn. It had always seemed a gross injustice to Nonconformists and Secularists that the teaching of what they thought mischievous superstition should be subsidised from the national exchequer. But to resist the payment of imperial taxation because one small portion of it went to help Church schools would have been found impossible in practice. On the other hand, the levying of a local rate in aid of Ritualism or Romanism both made the abuse itself

more palpable and offered its enemies a priceless opportunity for protesting against it. A campaign of passive resistance, as the refusal to pay the new school rates was called, began all over England, and has continued year after year ever since, numbers of men and women allowing their furniture to be seized and sold rather than submit quietly to so hateful an imposition. They were not breaking the law any more than the Parliamentary obstructives break it; they were simply leaving the law to take care of itself. Meanwhile, a vastly greater number of Englishmen, with the English love of fair play in their hearts, although they did not see their way to following the example of the passive resisters, watched them with silent sympathy, accumulating stores of burning indignation against the Government and the party which, without any mandate from the country, had given occasion for such a crying scandal. Others rather welcomed the new Act, in the clear prevision that its authors would ultimately be found to have defeated their own end. For they had facilitated the eventual assimilation of all State-aided schools, voluntary or otherwise, to the old Board schools, which were unsectarian: what was more, they had paved the way to secular education in all elementary schools—a step already taken in the United States—since Church people on their side objected to simple Bible teaching as itself only another form of sectarian religion.

While Mr. Balfour was reviving the old system of privilege and protection in religion, his colleague Mr. Chamberlain was engaged in the congenial task of agitating for its revival in trade. As

Colonial Secretary, he had done much to cultivate a feeling of closer unity between England and her Colonies, which, indeed, had been practically shown on their side by sending numerous volunteers to the help of our armies in the Boer War. It was now proposed to attach them still more closely to the mother country by the concession of certain commercial advantages. So far the reciprocity, as Mrs. Carlyle would say, had been all on one side, seeing that we admitted their staple exports duty-free while they kept out our manufactures by a high protective tariff. At one time a system of Free Trade within the Empire had been suggested, with protective duties against the foreigner alone. But, as this was an arrangement which the Colonial manufacturers could on no account have been induced to accept, a compromise was hit on. Australia had already begun to admit our products into her markets at a slightly lower rate of duties than those levied on the goods of other nations. Why should not she and all the other Colonies be induced to differentiate still further in our favour by our continuing to admit their goods duty free, while taxing all other imports to such an extent as would give Colonial wares, and especially Colonial food-stuffs, an advantage that would enable them to drive all other competitors out of the English market? And this, it was argued, would be only fair in view of the increasing tolls everywhere imposed for protective purposes on English manufactures, to the signal benefit, as was alleged, of the working classes in the countries where that policy had been adopted.

The Tariff Reformers, as Mr. Chamberlain's

followers called themselves, worked this last point with unremitting energy in their addresses to popular audiences, through platform oratory and a cheap daily Press. Increased wages for those already employed, and employment for those out of work, were held out as inducements to abandon the whole commercial system on which this country had lived and thriven for fifty years, and which was looked up to as an ideal by economic thinkers all over the world.

It was a remarkable and suspicious circumstance that Conservatives, of all people, should be found making war on routine and tradition, appealing to reason against prejudice and fetish-worship; remarkable also that capitalists, landowners, and parsons should suddenly develop such an intense interest in the welfare of the artisan and the labourer. Even under the *alias* of Tory Democrat, a Conservative who does not conserve looks like an unintelligible self-contradiction until it has been discovered that he is harking back to the catchwords used by his grandfather sixty years ago.

After all, what the Tariff Reformers urged was not reason, but authority—the authority of Germany, a retrograde military Empire, and the authority of America, whose external policy is controlled by a plutocratic ring. They refused to see that Germany and America owe their increasing prosperity—so far as it is real—not to Protection, but to the sort of scientific education that Conservatism alone prevents England from acquiring.

What the British working man saw clearly through all the bewildering statistics, and still more bewildering calculations, flourished in his face

by the parasites and subsidised organs of the capitalist and landlord interest, was that an attempt was being made to tax his food, for the benefit partly of the rich at home, partly of Colonial millionaires—including the South African Randlords, who were importing gangs of coolies to work under durance in gold mines acquired at an enormous cost of English blood and treasure. A remedy for unemployment was, no doubt, highly desirable; but working men were inclined to look for it in a readjustment of the relations between labour and capital on Socialist lines rather than in new taxes on food.

Mr. Balfour, who succeeded Lord Salisbury as Prime Minister in July, 1902, combines with much less strength of character than Mr. Chamberlain a far finer and more cultivated intelligence; nor does he take his opinions at a five years' lease. But he belongs to a class of thinkers whose distrust of expert opinion leads them to reject the modern and scientific view of any subject in favour of some compromise with the older and more popular view. At a time when most men of intellect and learning not in Holy Orders had abandoned the popular theology, he published a book called *The Foundations of Belief*, for the purpose of rehabilitating it by a sceptical attack on reasoned belief in general. Suitability to our convenience seemed to be the test of credibility for this new logic, which in less articulate utterances is a very old logic indeed. He also advocated bimetallism—a convenient and therefore, presumably, a true doctrine for those who wish to pay off their gold debts in a depreciated silver

currency; but, by the same token, an inconvenient and untrue doctrine for their unfortunate creditors. On the question of Tariff Reform Mr. Balfour now professed himself a Free Trader, though not a fanatical one. If foreign countries kept out our goods by exorbitant duties, they were to be coerced into a more liberal policy by the imposition of retaliatory duties on their exports to us. It mattered nothing that retaliation had been long since abandoned after trial by English financiers; that the Protectionist States did not seem to have facilitated commercial relations with each other by their system of mutual prohibition; that retaliation could only work by giving artificial encouragement to industries which would refuse to be suppressed when the foreigner yielded to our demands. Every consideration suggested by experience or expediency gave way before the comprehensive and ingenuous principle that you cannot make a bargain unless you have something to offer.

Differences on economic policy proved fatal to the union of the Unionist Ministry. Mr. Chamberlain resigned because he was a Protectionist; the Duke of Devonshire and others resigned because they were Free Traders; finally, Mr. Balfour resigned, apparently because he was neither a Protectionist nor a Free Trader. His successor, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, had been chosen Liberal leader in 1899 on the strength, one must suppose, of his Parliamentary abilities, seeing that he had no record of distinguished public services, nor any standing as a popular hero outside the House. His Ministry, however, marks an entirely

new departure in English history from the extent to which it has been made up independently of the oligarchic tradition. Half the members of the Cabinet, carrying at least three quarters its weight of metal, are unconnected by birth with the great governing families; and of these the most popular is the former working man, Mr. John Burns. Regard for simple ability has never before been pushed so far in the choice of an Administration, and it is an earnest of what the future may bring forth. As the demands on Government in respect both to legislative and administrative efficiency grow more numerous and exacting, its functionaries in the higher as well as in the lower grades have to be chosen from a wider area; while again the transfer of Sovereignty, in John Austin's sense, from the middle class to the working class involves, by a sort of compensatory movement, the transfer of high office from the aristocracy to the professional and business classes, in whom the people have more confidence, being more accustomed to resort to them for advice and direction, as was long ago pointed out by James Mill.

Knowing that public opinion was on their side, the Liberals had long been pressing for a Dissolution; and Mr. Balfour, by resigning, placed it in their power to dissolve. The result surpassed their most sanguine expectations, and is without a parallel since 1832. The Unionists were left in a minority of 354—more than double their triumphant majority of 1895. In England, the most Conservative part of the Kingdom, where they had stood at 3 to 1 in 1895, and at more than 8 to 3 in 1900, they

now held little more than three seats to eight. True, the so-called Ministerialists did not form a homogeneous mass, for they included 84 Nationalists and 41 Independent Labour members; but the pure Liberals numbered 387—that is to say, a majority of more than 100 against the field.

This enormous shift in the party balance has been explained by a popular metaphor—the swing of the pendulum. On points of principle, however, there was no oscillation. As at the last two elections, the people voted for keeping their fundamental institutions intact. They were conservative in a better sense than the so-called Conservatives themselves, and more united than the Unionist party. They wished to preserve Free Trade; for, without being very profound economists, they knew that it had expert opinion and, so far as food went, common sense on its side. They wished to preserve and develop the Education settlement of 1870 as against the intrusion of subsidised dogma into the elementary schools. They looked with just suspicion on the importation of coolie labour into South Africa as an attempt to revive the slave-trade, abolished a century before. And now, as always, they condemned the inefficiency that accompanies divided counsels. If it had offended their instincts that Gladstone should separate from his old friends in 1886, and that Harcourt should be at loggerheads with Lord Rosebery in 1895, it offended them still more that Mr. Balfour should neither be able to agree with his late colleagues nor altogether, as appeared, with himself. Finally, it would, perhaps, not be too much if we were to credit the people with a wish

to avoid the mistake of 1885, and to secure the stability of the Liberal Government by giving it a majority over all other parties combined.

In carrying down this narrative to a date so recent as the last General Election, I have somewhat exceeded the limit usually assigned to even the most modern histories. My apology is that no other equally distinct line of demarcation between old things and new offers itself among the events of the immediate past. I propose to conclude with a general survey of the tendencies observable during the whole period embraced in this work.

Chapter XIX.

THE ECLIPSE OF GENIUS

It was shown in the first chapter of this work that the English constitutionalism of the eighteenth century, described by Montesquieu as an organisation of liberty, really amounted to an organisation of anarchy, not satisfying the requirements either of order or of progress, but indirectly favouring the development of individual genius and, to a still greater degree, the growth of material wealth. This genius also devoted itself to no very ideal ends, serving at its best for the creation of new mechanical appliances at home, and at its worst for the furtherance of conquest and rapine abroad; while the greed to which it ministered made men capable of the most heinous crimes.

During the latter part of the eighteenth century, and on into the first decades of the nineteenth, the increasing power of the Crown, instead of building up a new order, adds to the existing anarchy, disorganising the military power of the kingdom, breeding disaffection among its Roman Catholic inhabitants, and driving some of England's noblest citizens, at a time when her very existence was at stake, from the service of the State.

It seems at first as if the French Revolution would merely aggravate the evils under which we suffered, by turning the Government from a machine for levying taxes into an active agency for the

repression of free speech in politics and religion. Such, however, is not the most permanent, nor even the most immediate, effect of that unparalleled upheaval. By kindling into flame all the latent tendencies making for beauty in art, for truth in science, philosophy, religion—nor for these alone, but also for the "manners, freedom, virtue, power" whose loss our lost leader too belatedly deplored—the Revolution regenerates England with less expense of ruin than had been needed for the regeneration of France and Continental Europe. And so, when France turns faithless to her high mission as an evangelist of liberty, England comes forward to defend the cause of oppressed nationalities with sword and pen; first against Napoleon, then, after Napoleon's fall, against the Holy Alliance, until that also dissolves under the far extended influence of Canning's voice and Canning's will.

The power of the Crown, already undermined by the disease, discredit, and discord of its personal representatives, finally succumbs to the new spirit; and soon afterwards the old Tory party goes to pieces, one section uniting with the victorious Whigs, whose prestige is still further heightened by a second French Revolution, giving Parliamentary government on the English model to France. Under their auspices a first instalment of electoral reform transfers Sovereignty from the aristocracy to the middle class. This extension of political rights, so far from weakening the Administration, gives it increased strength, enabling a series of much-needed reforms, inspired by the philosophy of Bentham, to be carried. Then a rich and

privileged State Church gradually makes the position of the reforming Ministers untenable by blocking some of their most important measures, luring away their ablest men, and exciting popular bigotry against the faithful remnant. Yet even so progress is not arrested. For the reactionists defeat their own ends by placing in power a great middle class administrator, who, in his heart, despises the views that he affects to share. Free Trade, long advocated by the philosophical Radicals, finally triumphs under his direction, and the new Conservatism, like the old Toryism, is ruined by his desertion.

Free Trade only gives a triumphant popular expression to a new and peculiar phase of thought, a movement of temporary alienation from the State as such, a more or less declared hostility to all Sovereignty. For many years before the abolition of the Corn Laws, the main current of English Liberalism has flowed in other than political channels; and, indeed, a tendency shows itself all round to seek elsewhere than in the political conflicts of the day for the supreme interests of life, demanding on their behalf complete immunity from State control. A band of Oxford scholars, resenting Parliamentary interference with the Irish Church Establishment, assert the right of the Anglican Church to determine her own doctrine and discipline, and to preside over the spiritual destinies of the nation, by virtue of a divine commission handed down from the Apostles. A host of Presbyterian enthusiasts, casting away the bonds of lay patronage, unite in a new community supported by voluntary contributions. On the

material side it is proposed to supersede the legal relief of poverty by reviving the tutelage of the hereditary nobility over the peasants who cultivate their estates; while others wish to make the working classes altogether independent of eleemosynary aid by encouraging them to found co-operative societies for production and distribution. A series of new works in prose and poetry mark a new age of literary productivity, only less brilliant than the epochs of the Revolutionary war and the Regency. This new literature is not inspired by politics, but by individual motives, either social or philosophical; it does not oscillate, like the earlier and greater literatures, between revolt and resignation, defiance and despair, but is penetrated with infinite love and pity, fed from gorgeous memories, and illuminated by immortal hopes. A new school of history, saturated with literary and artistic feeling, aims at the ideal reproduction of the most stirring scenes, the most heroic figures of the past, in language approaching the effect of plastic or pictorial representation. And, conversely, the greatest prose writer of the century devotes himself to a literary interpretation of painting, architecture, and natural scenery, as a symbolism of the most thrilling emotions and of the profoundest ethical truths.

Science, after 1830, so organises her methods and so extends her domain as to cover the whole field of experience; while the philosophy of the previous century, revived with greater power than ever, declares that outside experience nothing can be known. The modern theories of energy and of evolution, enunciated with more and more distinctness,

are finally combined with the principles of the great English economists in a system of absolute individualism—a grandiose attempt to demonstrate that liberation from the tutelage of the State is the true goal of all reform, and an amount of vital enjoyment strictly proportioned to the vital effort put forth, the destined reward of all virtuous activity in the final stage of human development.

A view of the world and of life so committed to reason, so passionately human, so proudly self-sufficient, even when taking on a religious colouring, implicitly contradicts the pietistic movement, whether under its Tractarian or its Evangelical formulation. With the increasing seriousness of the age this contradiction becomes more explicit, and makes itself felt partly within the Church as a mystical modification of the old teaching, partly both among the clergy and the laity as a destructive criticism of the alleged evidences on which the various theologies have been built up. Carried on simultaneously among the higher and the lower classes of society, with more or less of reticence and caution on the one side, with uncompromising frankness on the other, the disintegrating process leads to a legal decision liberating the ministers of the Establishment from their supposed obligation to regard the whole Bible or any part of it as necessarily true—a decision which, so far, has been much more effective in giving freedom of speech to the laity than in giving it to the clergy.

Side by side with the emancipation of thought and feeling in England we find a world-wide movement for the propagation of political and civil liberty on the English model, partly stimulated by

direct encouragement from England. Peel's fall brings back to power Palmerston, the inheritor of Canning's spirit, and for a period of nearly twenty years the foremost figure in English politics, sometimes opposed on questions of detail by Russell and Gladstone, but at the great critical moments of European history working in fellowship with them. His personality is a potent factor in the Revolution of 1848, leading to the second French Empire, with whose aid he destroys Russia's European ascendancy, thus rendering possible two great triumphs of nationalism—first, the unification of Italy, practically accomplished during his life and with his assistance; then, after his death, the unification of Germany, whose preparation in Schleswig-Holstein an imperfect historical appreciation had led him to oppose.

An anti-slavery movement in America, long fed by English sympathy, leads up, during Palmerston's Administration, to a civil war, profoundly misconceived as to its origin and issues by the governing classes of England, but permanently affecting the future course of her history. After a struggle of unexampled magnitude, democracy triumphs in America, reawakening the dormant democratic spirit of the English people, and so doing for the revived Reform agitation of the middle 'sixties what the second French Revolution had done for middle-class enfranchisement in 1830, while it simultaneously re-kindles the smouldering fire of Irish nationality. English working men, debarred from exercising the right of combination to the full extent represented by their Trade Unions, seek a remedy for their grievances through the

acquisition of the Parliamentary franchise, as their fathers had sought to carry out more visionary schemes of social justice through the instrumentality of the People's Charter. Then the three streams of English Liberalism, rationalist, political, and industrial, uniting in a current of irresistible strength, for a time bear down all before them. Much that the Whigs of 1830 had feared or failed to accomplish is now obtained. Household suffrage, the ballot, Church disestablishment and land reform in Ireland, the relief of Dissenters from Church rates, the nationalisation of the universities, the provision up to a certain point of unsectarian elementary education by the State, the rescue of the Army from plutocratic monopoly — articles mostly of the Benthamite programme—are carried, so to speak, at a rush. Then the reforming Ministers, failing to appreciate the breadth and depth of the movement they profess to lead, find themselves replaced by the reactionists, with whose help they have held their own most advanced followers in check. The Tory leader on his side loses ground by abetting a feeble attempt to restrain the superstitious practices in which Church Toryism finds its most genuine expression.

Meanwhile a more effective stand is made against reviving sacerdotalism by a renewal of the rationalistic movement, this time headed by the most distinguished names in poetry, literature, philosophy, and science—an ample compensation for the temporary defeat of Liberalism in politics. And that defeat is soon turned into overwhelming victory. As in the times of Canning and Palmerston, political Liberalism receives a new impetus from

the sympathy of England with the struggle of nationalism against oppression, represented this time by the Christian subjects of the Porte. Irish interests intervene also, for the fourth time in the century, to complicate the situation, making the task of Liberal statesmen on their return to office incomparably more difficult. Still, thanks to the ever-growing power of the State—itself a result of democratic progress—the legislative and administrative machine, by whichever party leader it may be directed, works with a smoothness and an efficiency before unknown.

It is possible that a concentration of power already so great, and likely to grow greater still, may be viewed by some friends of liberty with jealousy and alarm. It was, in fact, so viewed by Herbert Spencer. This greatest of all English systematic thinkers latterly devoted most of his philosophical activity to upholding the rights of the individual against the claims of the State. Historically his position, like Buckle's, was determined by sympathy with the economists in their fight for the new Poor Law and for Free Trade. Here, however, we are not concerned with the derivation of the theory, but with its truth. Spencer's physiological analogies will not help us much, nor will his general law of evolution, to which others might give a different interpretation. It is a question to be settled on grounds of relative expediency. No doubt there have been occasions in the world's history when similar developments of State sovereignty have proved injurious to the industry, the intellect, the morality, or the general

well-being of the people which experienced them. With ourselves the experience is comparatively new, and perhaps the materials for a comprehensive estimate of its meaning do not yet exist. But so far the prospect seems hopeful. It will be remembered that the experiment of anarchy was tried, more or less, in the eighteenth century, with results which were not satisfactory, even from the standpoint of freedom. The freedom of some meant the enslavement of others, more especially the freedom of parents to bring up their children as they liked. A child necessarily lives in subjection ; but compulsory education in a modern schoolroom is, generally speaking, more to its taste—less like slavery—than compulsory toil in a pestilential factory. For grown-up people a visit from the inspector of nuisances involves less restraint than confinement to a sick bed. To take a more complex case, immunity from ecclesiastical tyranny has only been obtained at the price of having an Administration able to carry measures securing it through Parliament. A weak Government, at the mercy of sinister sectional interests, may be easily got to pass Protectionist legislation ; to repeal such legislation, or to prevent its re-enactment, are tasks demanding irresistible strength.

Our present enormous naval and military expenditure involves the levying of taxes to a corresponding extent ; and this, though sanctioned, after a fashion, by the majority of the electorate, certainly amounts to an abridgment of the liberty of those who pay against their will. Yet even here it may be argued that the practical alternative does not lie between high and low taxes. It lies

between contributions to a fleet and army maintained for defensive purposes by our own Government, and equal contributions made to maintain the fleet and army of some Continental Power, which would annex us if we were not prepared to fight for independence, as Japan was prepared to fight Russia.

Freedom of criticism on the Government is considerably greater now than when a weak and incapable oligarchy held the reins. Freedom of criticism in theology, nearly lost under the long Tory *régime,* has been recovered step by step with the later growth of democracy. At Oxford and Cambridge in particular the change has been most remarkable since Thirlwall was driven from the one and J. A. Froude, several years later, from the other—Thirlwall for opposing compulsory chapel attendance, and Froude for publishing a novel of heterodox tendencies. There, as also at the Scotch universities, Hegel's philosophy has played the same part it played between two and three generations ago in Germany, at once veiling and facilitating the transition from a supernaturalist to a scientific view of nature and man. For a time Hegelians, both of the looser and the stricter observance, were at pains to convey their dissent from the popular theology in language open to an orthodox interpretation. More recently the chief representatives of the school have emulated the plain speaking of Strauss and Feuerbach.

One sometimes hears it said that the Materialism of thirty years ago has been superseded by a theory variously described as Spiritualism and as Idealism. The assertion is doubly misleading. It is not true

that Materialism, in the philosophical sense, prevailed to a greater extent then than now. Mill, Spencer, Lewes, Tyndall, Huxley, and Clifford would have disclaimed the name with as much right as Mr. Haldane or Mr. Asquith. If, on the other hand, the name is used to denote denial of supernatural religion, or as the equivalent of Agnosticism, then it is not true to say that Materialism has been superseded, for such denial is now more common than ever, whether among philosophers or among the educated classes in general.

Materialism in another sense—that is to say, the rage for the acquisition of money valued chiefly as a means for the gratification of animal or childish appetites—has, unhappily, been long on the increase, as is shown, among other ways, by the spread of a passion for gambling through all classes of the community. Rapid industrial progress naturally fixes the attention on money-making, and on the spending or the reinvestment of what is made, as the great interests of life; and gambling enables both these ends to be pursued with the least possible trouble or delay, the gratification of getting money and the gratification of spending it (in fresh stakes) being so combined as to raise each other to the highest pitch of intensity. And democracy, in so far as it favours industrial progress, shares to that extent in the responsibility for its reaction on private life.

It remains to consider the modern movement in its reaction on the intellectual life of the community. So far as this is represented by the amount of

literary genius forthcoming, most qualified judges are, I presume, agreed in thinking that what we have to report is a continuous decline, advancing by a series of downward steps until at the present day we find ourselves in a state of destitution not paralleled since the period preceding the Reformation. It may be open to question whether the generation of Byron, Shelley, and Keats shows any falling-off from the generation of Wordsworth, Hazlitt, Scott, Lamb, Coleridge, Landor, and Jane Austen. But the Regency clearly stands above the Early Victorian period as much as that stands above the Middle Victorian period, and the Middle Victorian above the Late. As for our own age, it would be surprising to learn that any English writer now under fifty has produced a book which will be remembered as literature fifty years hence. The literary output is, indeed, enormous both in prose and poetry; and much talent is devoted to literature as a profession: never before has the average of cleverness, and even of good writing, been so high. But high averages are no substitute for exceptional genius; as Goethe says, a hundred greys do not make one white horse.

This dearth of first-class literary ability has been ascribed to the absorption of the nation's best intellect in scientific work. The explanation might hold good if science had more distinguished names to boast of than literature. Unhappily, she has not. Here also, or, rather, here especially, mediocrity seems to be the order of the day since 1879, the year of Clifford's and Clerk Maxwell's death. We often hear of new discoveries and new

methods, but there is a remarkable impersonality about them; they are the result of co-operation among a number of inquirers rather than of individual genius. It is the same in philosophy, except that philosophy has no such certain results to show. The Early and Middle Victorian heroes, Mill, Bain, Buckle, and Spencer, are supposed to have been superseded—by whom, or for how long, is not clear.

Historical composition, involving as it does both literary and scientific ability, supplies us with another test. An arrangement of nineteenth-century historians in chronological groups gives us first: Hallam, Napier, Milman, Grote, Arnold, Thirlwall, Finlay, and Macaulay; followed by Kinglake, Helps, Froude, Buckle, Freeman, Goldwin Smith, Stubbs, and Gardiner; next come Seeley, J. R. Green, Lecky, Bryce, Sir George Trevelyan, and J. A. Symonds; after whom we are left with the contributors to *The Cambridge Modern History,* and to *The Political History of England.*

Parliamentary, forensic, pulpit, and platform oratory have declined at the same rate—a circumstance the more remarkable as one would expect every form of eloquence to be stimulated by a democratic environment; and journalism, as compared with what it was fifty, forty, or thirty years ago, shows a like decay.

Women have contributed so much to the best English literature that their emancipation and higher education might well have been looked to as opening fresh sources of power. If anything, the effect of their more favoured position has been

to stop the former supplies. Not only are the Sibylline books rapidly decreasing in number, but their contents are less interesting, and the price paid for them has risen.[1]

It was said twenty years ago that there was no man in the whole world under fifty one would cross the street to look at. Thus, whatever may be the causes of this decline in genius, they are common to all civilised mankind ; only, as England used to be in a peculiar way the land of genius, they must have acted with exceptional energy among ourselves. In all probability these causes are no other than the tendencies already indicated as characteristic of our more recent history: the rise of a strong Government, the reform of abuses, the growth of democracy, the accumulation of wealth, the spread of education, the dissolution of theological beliefs. Let us see in what way they work.

It is a question whether Shelley was right when he said that to divide true love is not to take it away. One would have liked to hear Mary's opinion on the subject. At any rate, to divide intellect *is* to take it away. Now, merely to keep going, and periodically to renew, the huge administrative, legislative, military, and educational machinery of the modern State must absorb an enormous amount of intelligence and moral force, leaving so much the less available, so to speak, for play. Subjection, also, to such machinery involves a certain amount of steady drill, a uniformity of regulation by which genius is apt to be stifled.

[1] The accomplished historian of modern astronomy, Miss Agnes Clerke, was educated entirely at home.

When we hear that a Government office is a nest of singing birds we may conjecture, without listening, that the birds do not utter wood-notes wild.

Besides repressing originality and spontaneity among the higher intellects, popular education indirectly contributes to the same result by calling into existence a new public of inferior taste and less critical ability. Men of letters, and even men of science—not to mention politicians and preachers —lay themselves out to capture this new public by catering to its demands. At the same time, the number of candidates for popular favour being immensely multiplied by the diffusion of a facile culture, each competitor tries to draw attention to himself by sedulously cultivating what is called the personal note, which is more often than not a borrowed note strained out of recognition in a particular way. Now, the test of prose destined to become classical is that it can be read over and over again with increasing pleasure ; whereas the oftener we read this prose of the spurious personal note, the more obvious does its meretricious character become. And the test of good poetry, as Leslie Stephen pointed out, is that it learns itself by heart, which is just what does not happen with poetry that is a jumble of outlandish vocables, painfully picked out of the dictionary, or of adjectives whose connection with their substantives amounts to a syntactical intrigue.

Men and women of ability are, by the sympathetic and communicative tendency of their nature, peculiarly susceptible to such far-fetched literary appeals ; so that they sincerely admire the misdirection of talent, and point it out for the admiration

of the less gifted in the critical organs that they control. At the same time the increasing accumulation of wealth, with its inevitable accompaniment of increasing luxury, makes the production of paying—that is to say, artificial or morbid—literature an economic necessity. And men of science work under the same restraint. Once, like Agassiz, they had no time to make money. Perhaps in the near future they will have no time for anything else.

I have mentioned the removal of abuses and the destruction of false dogmas in progress for the last century as counting among influences unfavourable to genius. One is sorry to have to say this of such a necessary process; but I believe it will be found, on examination, that the fact is so. For these reforms, however salutary in other ways, tell also as the withdrawal of so much stimulation from that militant enthusiasm, that noble rage against cruelty and falsehood, which has ever been so large a constituent in the higher intellectual energisings of the past. Relative wrongness has been the negative electricity without which the positive electricity of their relative rightness could not exist. We know it from the confessions of genius. Shelley, with full adhesion, quotes Byron as saying that "most men are cradled into poetry by wrong." Newman tells the scholar who would reach "Love's high unruffled state," that he must "first learn him how to hate." Browning explains that Dante "loved well because he hated, hated wickedness that hinders loving." And even Matthew Arnold, who hated hatred itself, cries

out when confronted by an evil world: "Let me be keener to slay thee lest thou poison me!"

In accordance with this law, genius, where it still exists, is chiefly to be found among the collectivists or the anarchists to whom our whole society is hateful as an organised spoliation of the working classes; an organised defilement of the sexual relations; an organised and useless torture, inflicted under the name of justice, on those unhappiest victims whom we call the criminal classes.

It is no part of the historian's business to predict or to advise; and the present writer, at any rate, is not conscious of being qualified for either office. What has been said in this connection must therefore not be taken as expressing any approval of the views so brilliantly advocated in some contemporary novels and dramas. The sole point contended for is that literary genius, with few exceptions, has so far found its highest expression in a moral purpose, in the utterance of a protest against the propagation of falsehood or the practice of injustice, real or illusory, in fancy or in fact.

Perhaps a profounder analysis may show that the ethical motive is itself referable to a still more general law, and that the vital conditions of genius are furnished in the last resort by variety and contrast. Now, the general tendency of modern progress has been adverse to those conditions; it has made for assimilation and uniformity. English influence at its best has told for the extension of personal liberty and of representative government over the whole world; more equivocally, for the similar extension of English capitalist industry. At home Liberalism has always meant the extension

of rights and the removal of privileges. Our commercial legislation has decreed that no one industry shall be favoured at the expense of another, that the interest of the consumer shall not be sacrificed to the interest of the producer. Our criminal law has been reformed in the sense of proportioning punishment to crime. Our Factory Acts and Education Acts have given the children of the poor a position more like the position enjoyed by the children of the rich. Our social legislation tends towards giving the working classes the same immunity from disease and danger that is enjoyed by the middle and upper classes, or at any rate a money compensation for its loss. Sir William Harcourt's great Budget of 1894, by its identification of the succession duty on real and personal estate, marks a step in the same direction. It may be objected that, by progressively increasing the duty on large estates, Harcourt rather differentiated than assimilated the burden of taxation. But in reality this arrangement amounts to a more subtle kind of assimilation. For it proportions the tax, not to what has been inherited, but to what can be spared. And the same rule holds in reference to the system of exemptions and deductions observed in assessing small incomes for taxation.

Assimilation seems also to be the law of progressive religious thought in England. Evangelical pietism aimed at extending the field of religious obligation over the whole of life. Tractarianism tried to do the same thing more thoroughly by providing a more effective machinery for the purpose; by assimilating the Church of England, first to the primitive, and then to the mediæval, Church.

Since then, as a direct result of Anglican influence, there has followed the Modernist movement of our own time, which is simply an assimilation of Roman to Protestant principles on the lines of private judgment as distinguished from authority and tradition. Meanwhile, for over two centuries, the far broader methods of Rationalism have been working for the establishment of one uniform philosophy of existence, constructed on principles of pure reason, and tending towards the total exclusion of a supernatural world from any share in our interests or beliefs.

Genius of a high order has been required for carrying out some of these assimilations; but their total effect has been to abolish the conditions under which genius exists, just as the highest military abilities need war to bring them into activity, and are then thrown into the shade by the peace that they have helped to restore. It must, therefore, not be read as a sign of degeneration that genius among ourselves is no longer forthcoming in the same profusion as before. Whether it be, as some have tried to show, a morbid growth of the mind still remains uncertain; that it grows on morbid conditions seems an established fact. And one of these conditions is, over and above the existence of inequalities and contrasts, an erroneous appreciation of their values—a false estimate of their real extent, a false estimate of their importance for human happiness, a false estimate of the rapidity with which it is possible for human intellect and energy to replace them, when they are undesirable, by an improved state of things. Now, such an erroneous valuation is particularly stimulating to

genius. "Thy sorrow," exclaims Carlyle, "is the inverted image of thy nobleness; the depth of thy despair is the measure of thy capacity for hope!" But, unfortunately for genius, the tendency of advancing knowledge is to diminish both its sorrow and its hope. That we should have learned to appreciate the difficulties of reform as they never were appreciated before is only one aspect of the universal disillusionment our organised experience has brought about. And this decay of illusion must be counted among the causes to which the decline of genius is due. For illusion was the very air that it breathed—an illusive estimate of the evils to be overcome, and of the forces available for their overthrow; an illusive estimate of historical heroism, individual or collective, creating epics and dramas through all the past; illusive estimates of what the old religions had effected, leading to estimates equally illusive of what new religions or new sciences might also effect, creating Utopias in the future—these, in great measure, inspired the splendid imaginative and historical literatures, the vast philosophies, the glowing oratory, whose discontinuance we now deplore. Yet for our own clearer sense of reality we must also thank those children of light, the men of genius, less careful than the children of this world to secure the perpetuation of their race. For that very organisation of experience which has dispersed the mists of ignorance is their work; nor can its lessons be more impressively conveyed than in the warning given by Matthew Arnold, as the sum of Wordsworth's teaching, neither to make man too much a God, nor God too much a man.

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Art III.—The Stoics.

Die Philosophie der Griechen. Von Dr. Edward Zeller. Dritter Theil, Erste Abtheilung. Leipzig: 1880.

THE systems of Plato and Aristotle were splendid digressions from the main line of ancient speculation rather than stages in its regular development. The philosophers who came after them went back to an earlier tradition, and the influence of the two greatest Hellenic masters, when it was felt at all, acted almost entirely as a disturbing or deflecting force. The extraordinary reach of their principles could not, in truth, be appreciated until the organized experience of mankind had accumulated to an extent requiring the application of new rules for its comprehension and utilization; and to make such an accumulation possible nothing less was needed than the combined efforts of the whole western world. Such religious, educational, social, and political reforms as those contemplated in Plato's Republic, though originally designed for a single city community, could not be realized, even approximately, within a narrower field than that offered by the mediæval church and the feudal state. The ideal theory first gained practical significance in connection with the metaphysics of Christian theology. The place given by Plato to mathematics has only been fully justified by the development of modern science. So also Aristotle's criticism became of practical importance only when the dreams against which it was directed had embodied themselves in a fabric of oppressive superstition. Only the vast extension of reasoned knowledge has enabled us to disentangle the vitally important elements of Aristotle's logic from the mass of useless refinements in which they are embedded; his fourfold division of causes could not be estimated rightly even by Bacon, Descartes, or Spinoza; while his arrangement of the sciences, his remarks on classification, and his contributions to comparative biology bring us up to the very verge of theories whose first promulgation is still fresh in the memories of men.

Again, the spiritualism taught by Plato and Aristotle alike—by the disciple, indeed, with even more distinctness than by the master—was so entirely inconsistent with the common belief of antiquity as to remain a dead letter for nearly six centuries—that is, until the time of Plotinus. The difference between body and mind was recognized by every school, but only as the difference between solid and gaseous matter is recognized by us; while the antithesis between conscious and unconscious existence, with all

its momentous consequences, was recognized by none. The old hypothesis had to be thoroughly thought out before its insufficiency could be completely and irrevocably confessed.

Nor was this the only reason why the spiritualists lost touch of their age. If in some respects they were far in advance of early Greek thought, in other respects they were far behind it. Their systems were pervaded by an unphilosophical dualism which tended to undo much that had been achieved by their less prejudiced predecessors. For this we have partly to blame their environment. The opposition of God and the world, heaven and earth, mind and matter, necessity and free-will, considered as co-ordinate forces working within the same sphere, was a concession—though of course an unconscious concession—to the stupid bigotry of Athens. Yet at the same time they had failed to solve those psychological problems which had most interest for an Athenian public. Instead of following up the attempt made by the Sophists and Socrates to place morality on a scientific foundation, they busied themselves with the construction of a new machinery for diminishing the efficacy of temptation or for strengthening the efficacy of law. To the question What is the highest good? Plato gave an answer which nobody could understand, and Aristotle an answer which was almost absolutely useless to anybody but himself. The other great problem, What is the ultimate foundation of knowledge? was left in an equally unsatisfactory state. Plato never answered it at all; Aristotle merely pointed out the negative conditions which must be fulfilled by its solution.

It is not, then, surprising that the Academic and Peripetatic schools utterly failed to carry on the great movement inaugurated by their respective founders. The successors of Plato first lost themselves in a labyrinth of Pythagorean mysticism, and then sank into the position of mere moral instructors. It is outside our present purpose to relate the history of that remarkable revolution by which the Academy regained a foremost place in Greek thought; but we may observe that this was done by taking up and presenting in its original purity a tradition of older date than Platonism, though presented under a new aspect and mixed with other elements by Plato. The heirs of Aristotle, after staggering on a few paces under the immense burden of his encyclopædic bequest, came to a dead halt, and contented themselves with keeping the treasure safe until the time should arrive for its appropriation and reinvestment by a stronger speculative race.

No sooner did the two imperial systems lose their ascendency than the germs which they had temporarily overshadowed sprang up into vigorous vitality, and for more than five centuries domi-

nated the whole course not only of Greek but of European thought. Of these by far the most important was the naturalistic idea, the belief that physical science might be substituted for religious superstitions and local conventions as an impregnable basis of conduct. On a former occasion* we endeavoured to show that, while there are traces of this idea in the philosophy of Heracleitus, and while its roots stretch far back into the literature and popular faith of Greece, it was formulated for the first time by the two great Sophists, Prodicus and Hippias, who, in the momentous division between Nature and Law, placed themselves—Hippias more particularly—on the side of Nature. Two causes led to the temporary discredit of their teaching. One was the perversion by which natural right became the watchword of those who, like Plato's Callicles, held that nothing should stand between the strong man and the gratification of his desire for pleasure or for power. The other was the keen criticism of the Humanists, the friends of social convention, who held with Protagoras that Nature was unknowable, or with Gorgias that she did not exist, or with Socrates that her laws were the secret of the gods. It was in particular the overwhelming personal influence of Socrates which triumphed. He drew away from the Sophists their strongest disciple, Antisthenes, and convinced him that philosophy was valuable only in so far as it became a life-renovating power, and that, viewed in this light, it had no relation to anything outside ourselves. But just as Socrates had discarded the physical speculations of former teachers, so also did Antisthenes discard the dialectic which Socrates had substituted for them, even to the extent of denying that definition was possible. Yet he seems to have kept a firm hold on the two great ideas that were the net result of all previous philosophy, the idea of a Cosmos, the common citizenship of which made all men potentially equal, and the idea of reason as the essential prerogative of man.

Antisthenes pushed to its extreme consequences a movement begun by the naturalistic Sophists. His doctrine was what would now be called anarchic collectivism. The State, marriage, private property, and the then accepted forms of religion, were to be abolished, and all mankind were to herd promiscuously together. Either he or his followers, alone among the ancients, declared that slavery was wrong, and like Socrates, he held that the virtue of men and women was the same. But what he meant by this broad human virtue, which according to him was identical with happiness, is not clear. We only know that he dissociated

* Westminster Review for April, 1880: Art. "The Greek Humanists: Nature and Law."

it in the strongest manner from pleasure. "I had rather be mad than delighted," is one of his characteristic sayings. It would appear, however, that what he really objected to was self-indulgence—the pursuit of sensual gratification for its own sake—and that he was ready to welcome the enjoyments naturally accompanying the healthy discharge of vital function.

Antisthenes and his school, of which Diogenes is the most popular and characteristic type, were afterwards known as Cynics; but the name is never mentioned by Plato and Aristotle, nor do they allude to the scurrility and systematic indecency afterwards associated with it. The anecdotes relating to this unsavoury subject should be received with extreme suspicion. There has always been a tendency to believe that philosophers carry out in practice what are vulgarly believed to be the logical consequences of their theories. Thus it is related of Pyrrho the Sceptic that when out walking he never turned aside to avoid any obstacle or danger, and was only saved from destruction by the vigilance of his friends. This is of course a silly fable; and we have Aristotle's word for it that the Sceptics took as good care of their lives as other people. In like manner we may conjecture that the Cynics, advocating as they did a return to Nature and defiance of prejudice, were falsely credited with what was falsely supposed to be the practical exemplification of their precepts. It is at any rate remarkable that Epictêtus, a man not disposed to undervalue the obligations of decorum, constantly refers to Diogenes as a kind of philosophic saint, and that he describes the ideal Cynic in words which would apply without alteration to the character of a Christian apostle.

Cynicism, if we understand it rightly, was only the mutilated form of an older philosophy having for its object to set morality free from convention, and to found it anew on a scientific knowledge of natural law. The need of such a system was not felt so long as Plato and Aristotle were unfolding their wonderful schemes for a reorganization of action and belief. With the temporary collapse of these schemes it came once more to the front. The result was a new school which so thoroughly satisfied the demands of the age, that for five centuries the noblest spirits of Greece and Rome, with few exceptions, adhered to its doctrines; that in dying it bequeathed some of their most vital elements to the metaphysics and the theology by which it was succeeded; that with their decay it reappeared as an important factor in modern thought; and that its name has become imperishably associated in our own language with the proud endurance of suffering, the self-sufficiency of conscious rectitude, and the renunciation of all sympathy, except what may be derived from contemplation of the immortal dead, whose heroism

is recorded in history, or of the eternal cosmic forces working out their glorious tasks with unimpassioned energy and imperturbable repose.

One day, some few years after the death of Aristotle, a short lean swarthy young man, of weak build, with clumsily shaped limbs, and head inclined to one side, was standing in an Athenian bookshop, intently studying a roll of manuscript. His name was Zeno, and he was a native of Citium, a Greek colony in Cyprus, where the Hellenic element had become adulterated with a considerable Phœnician infusion. According to some accounts, Zeno had come to the great centre of intellectual activity to study, according to others for the sale of Tyrian purple. At any rate the volume which he held in his hand decided his vocation. It was the second book of Xenophon's Memoirs of Socrates. Zeno eagerly asked where such men as he whose sayings stood recorded there were to be found. At that moment the Cynic Crates happened to pass by. "There is one of them," said the bookseller, "follow him."

The history of this Crates was distinguished by the one solitary romance of Greek philosophy. A young lady of noble family, named Hipparchia, fell desperately in love with him, refused several most eligible suitors, and threatened to kill herself unless she was given to him in marriage. Her parents in despair sent for Crates. Marriage, for a philosopher, was against the principles of his sect, and he at first joined them in endeavouring to dissuade her. Finding his remonstrances unavailing, he at last flung at her feet the staff and wallet which constituted his whole worldly possessions, exclaiming, "Here is the bridegroom, and that is the dower. Think of this matter well, for you cannot be my partner unless you follow the same calling with me." Hipparchia consented, and thenceforth, heedless of taunts, conformed her life in every respect to the Cynic pattern.

Zeno had more delicacy or less fortitude than Hipparchia; and the very meagre intellectual fare provided by Crates must have left his inquisitive mind unsatisfied. Accordingly we find him leaving this rather disappointing substitute for Socrates to study philosophy under Stilpo the Megarian dialectician and Polemo the head of the Academy; while we know that he must have gone back to Heracleitus for the physical basis from which contemporary speculation had by this time cut itself completely free. At length, about the beginning of the third century B.C., Zeno, after having been a learner for twenty years, opened a school on his own account. As if to mark the practical bearing of his doctrine he chose one of the most frequented resorts in the city for its promulgation. There was at Athens a portico called the Poecile Stoa, adorned with frescoes by Polygnôtus the

greatest painter of the Cimonian period. It was among the monuments of that wonderful city, at once what the Loggia dei Lanzi is to Florence, and what Raphael's Stanze are to Rome; while, like the Place de la Concorde in Paris, it was darkened by the terrible associations of a revolutionary epoch. A century before Zeno's time fourteen hundred Athenian citizens had been slaughtered under its colonnades by order of the Thirty. "I will purify the Stoa," said the Cypriote stranger; and the feelings still associated with the word Stoicism prove how nobly his promise was fulfilled.

How much of the complete system known in later times under this name was due to Zeno himself, we do not know; for nothing but a few fragments of his and of his immediate successors' writings is left. The idea of combining Antisthenes with Heracleitus, and both with Socrates, probably belongs to the founder of the school. His successor, Cleanthes, a man of character rather than of intellect, was content to hand on what the master had taught. Then came another Cypriote, Chrysippus, of whom we are told that without him the Stoa would not have existed, so thoroughly did he work out the system in all its details, and so strongly did he fortify its positions against hostile criticism by a framework of elaborate dialectic. "Give me the propositions, and I will find the proofs!" he used to say to Cleanthes. After him, nothing of importance was added to the doctrines of the school, although the spirit by which they were animated seems to have undergone profound modifications, in the lapse of ages.

In reality Stoicism was not, like the older Greek philosophers, a creation of individual genius. It bears the character of a compilation both on its first exposition and on its final completion. Polemo, who had been a fine gentleman before he became a philosopher, taunted Zeno with filching his opinions from every quarter, like the cunning little Phœnician trader that he was. And it was said that the seven hundred treatises of Chrysippus would be reduced to a blank if everything that he had borrowed from others were to be erased. He seems indeed, to have been the father of review-writers, and to have used the reviewer's right of transcription with more than modern license. Nearly a whole tragedy of Euripides reappeared in one of his "articles," and a wit on being asked what he was reading, replied, "the *Medea* of Chrysippus."

In this respect, Stoicism betrays its descent from the encyclopædic lectures of the earlier Sophists, particularly Hippias. While professedly subordinating every other study to the art of virtuous living, its professors seem to have either put a very wide interpretation on virtue, or else to have raised its founda-

tion to a most unnecessary height. They protested against Aristotle's glorification of knowledge as the supreme end, and declared its exclusive pursuit to be merely a more refined form of self-indulgence; but, being Greeks, they shared the speculative passion with him, and seized on any pretext that enabled them to gratify it. And this inquisitiveness was apparently much stronger in Asiatic Hellas, whence the Stoics were almost entirely recruited, than in the old country where centuries of intellectual activity had issued in a scepticism from which their fresher minds revolted.* It is mentioned by Zeller as a proof of exhaustion and comparative indifference to such inquiries, that the Stoics should have fallen back upon their physics on the Heracleitean philosophy. But all the ideas respecting the constitution of Nature that were then possible had already been put forward. The Greek capacity for discovery was perhaps greater in the third century that at any former time; but from the very progress of science it was necessarily confined to specialists such as Aristarchus of Samos, or Archimedes. And if the Stoics made no original contributions to physical science, they at least accepted what seemed at that time to be its established results; here, as in other respects, offering a marked contrast to the Epicurean school. If a Cleanthes assailed the heliocentric hypothesis of Aristarchus on religious grounds, he was treading in the footsteps of Aristotle. It was far more important that he or his successors should have taught the true theory of the earth's shape, of the moon's phases, of eclipses, and of the relative size and distance of the heavenly bodies. On this last subject, indeed, one of the later Stoics, Posidonius, arrived at or accepted conclusions which, although falling far short of the reality, approximated to it in a very remarkable manner, when we consider what imperfect means of measurement the Greek astronomers had at their disposition.†

In returning to one of the older cosmologies, the Stoics placed themselves in opposition to the system of Aristotle as a whole, although on questions of detail they frequently adopted his conclusions. The object of Heracleitus, as against the Pythagoreans, had been to dissolve away every antithesis in a pervading

* It is significant that the only Stoic who fell back on pure Cynicism should have been Aristo of Chios, a genuine Greek, while the only one who, like Aristotle, identified good with knowledge was Herillus, a Carthaginian.

† Posidonius estimated the sun's distance from the earth at 500,000,000 stades, and the moon's distance at 2,000,000 stades, which, counting the stade at 200 yards, gives about 57,000,000 and 227,000 miles respectively. The sun's diameter he reckoned, according to one account, at 440,000 miles, about half the real amount; according to another account at a quarter less. Zeller, *Ph. d. Gr.*, iii. 1, p. 190, Note 2.

unity of contradictories, and, as against the Eleatics, to substitute an eternal series of transformations for the changeless unity of absolute existence. The Stoics now applied the same method on a scale proportional to the subsequent development of thought. Aristotle had carefully distinguished God from the world, even to the extent of isolating him from all share in its creation, and interest in its affairs. The Stoics declared that God and the world were one. So far, it is allowable to call them pantheists. Yet their pantheism was very different from what we are accustomed to denote by that name, from the system of Spinoza, for example. Their strong faith in final causes and in Providence—a faith in which they closely followed Socrates—would be hardly consistent with the denial of a consciousness to the Supreme Being, quite distinct from the human consciousness with which it is identified by some modern philosophers. Their God was sometimes described as the soul of the world, the fiery element surrounding and penetrating every other kind of matter. What remained was the body of God ; but it was a body which he had originally created out of his own substance, and would, in the fulness of time, absorb into that substance again. Thus they keep the future conflagration foretold by Heracleitus, but gave it a more religious colouring. The process of creation was then to begin over again, and all things were to run the same course as before down to the minutest particulars, human history repeating itself, and the same persons returning to live the same lives once more. Such a belief of course involved the most rigid fatalism : and here again their doctrine offers a pointed contrast to that of Aristotle. The Stagirite, differing, as it would seem in this respect from all the older physicists, maintained that there was an element of chance and spontaneity in the sublunary sphere ; and without going very deeply into the mechanism of motives or the theory of moral responsibility, he had claimed a similar indeterminateness for the human will. Stoicism would hear of neither ; with it, as with modern science, the chain of causation is unbroken from first to last, and extends to all phenomena alike. The old theological notion of an omnipotent divine will, or of a destiny superior even to that will, was at once confirmed and continued by the new theory of natural law, just as the predestination of the Reformers reappeared in the metaphysical rationalism of Spinoza.*

* The Stoic necessarianism gave occasion to a repartee which has remained classical ever since, although its original authorship is known to few. A slave of Zeno's having been detected in some offence, tried to excuse himself by quoting his master's principle that he was fated to commit it. "And I was fated to chastise you," calmly replied the philosopher, immediately suiting the action to the words.

This dogma of universal determinism was combined in the Stoical system with an equally outspoken materialism. The capacity for either acting or being acted on was, according to Plato, the one convincing evidence of real existence; and he had endeavoured to prove that there is such a thing as mind apart from matter by its possession of this characteristic mark. The Stoics simply reversed his argument. Whatever acts or is acted on, they said, must be corporeal; therefore the soul is a kind of body. Here they only followed the common opinion of all philosophers who believed in an external world, except Plato and Aristotle, while to a certain extent anticipating the scientific automatism first taught in modern times by Spinoza, and simultaneously revived by various thinkers in our own day. To a certain extent only; for they did not recognize the independent reality of a consciousness in which the mechanical processes are either reflected, or represented under a different aspect. And they further gave their theory a somewhat grotesque expression by interpreting those qualities and attributes of things, which other materialists have been content to consider as belonging to matter, as themselves actual bodies. For instance, the virtues and vices were, according to them, so many gaseous currents by which the soul is penetrated and shaped—a materialistic rendering of Plato's theory that qualities are distinct and independent substances.

We must mention as an additional point of contrast between the Stoics and the subsequent schools which they most resembled, that while these look on the soul as inseparable from the body, and sharing its fortunes from first to last, although perfectly distinct from it in idea, they emphasized the antithesis between the two just as strongly as Plato, giving the soul an absolutely infinite power of self-assertion during our mortal life, and allowing it a continued, though not an immortal, existence after death.

What has been said of the human soul applies equally to God, who is the soul of the world. He also is conceived under the form of a material, but very subtle and all-penetrating, element to which our souls are much more closely akin than to the coarse clay with which they are temporarily associated. And it was natural that the heavenly bodies, in whose composition the ethereal element seemed so visibly to predominate, should pass with the Stoics, as with Plato and Aristotle, for conscious beings inferior only in sacredness and majesty to the Supreme Ruler of all. Thus, the philosophy which we are studying helps to prove the strength and endurance of the religious reaction to which Socrates first gave an argumentative expression, and by which he was ultimately hurried to his doom. We may even trace its increasing ascendency through the successive stages of the

Naturalistic school. Prodicus simply identified the gods of polytheism with unconscious physical forces ;* Antisthenes, while discarding local worship, believed, like Rousseau, in the existence of a single deity; Zeno, or his successors, revived the whole pantheon, but associated it with a pure morality, and explained away its more offensive features by an elaborate system of allegorical interpretation.

It was not, however, by its legendary beliefs that the living power of ancient religion was displayed, but by the study and practice of divination. This was to the Greeks and Romans what priestly direction is to a Catholic, or the interpretation of scripture texts to a Protestant believer. And the Stoics, in their anxiety to uphold religion as a bulwark of morality, went entirely along with the popular superstition; while at the same time they endeavoured to reconcile it with the universality of natural law by the same clumsily rationalistic methods that have found favour with some modern scientific defenders of the miraculous. The signs by which we are enabled to predict an event entered, they said, equally with the event itself into the order of Nature, being either connected with it by direct causation, as is the configuration of the heavenly bodies at a man's birth with his after fortunes, or determined from the beginning of the world to precede it according to an invariable rule, as with the indications derived from inspecting the entrails of sacrificial victims. And when sceptics asked of what use was the premonitory sign when everything was predestined, they replied that our behaviour in view of the warning was predestined as well.

To us the religion of the Stoics is interesting chiefly as a part of the machinery by which they attempted to make good the connection between natural and moral law, assumed rather than proved by their Sophistic and Cynic precursors. But before proceeding to this branch of the subject we must glance at their mode of conceiving another side of the fundamental relationship between man and the universe. This is logic in its widest sense, so understood as to include an account of the process by which we get our knowledge and the ultimate evidence of its reality no less than the laws of formal ratiocination.

In their theory of cognition the Stoics chiefly followed Aristotle; only with them the doctrine of empiricism is enunciated so distinctly as to be placed beyond the reach of misinterpretation. The mind is at first a *tabula rasa* and all our ideas are derived exclusively from the senses. But while knowledge as a whole rests on sense, the validity of each particular sense-perception must be determined by an appeal to reason, in other words, to

* Sextus Empiricus, p. 552, 18. F.

the totality of our acquired experience. So also the first principles of reasoning are not to be postulated, with Aristotle, as immediately and unconditionally certain; they are to be assumed as hypothetically true and gradually tested by the consequences deducible from them. Both principles well illustrate the synthetic method of the Stoics—their habit of bringing into close connection whatever Aristotle had studiously held apart. And we must maintain, in opposition to the German critics, that their method marks a real advance on his. It ought at any rate to find more favour with the experiential school of modern science, with those who hold that the highest mathematical and physical laws are proved, not by the impossibility of conceiving their contradictories, but by their close agreement with all the facts accessible to our observation.

It was a consequence of the principle just stated that in formal logic the Stoics should give precedence to the hypothetical over the categorical syllogism. From one point of view their preference for this mode of stating an argument was an advance on the method of Aristotle, whose reasonings, if explicitly set out, would have assumed the form of disjunctive syllogisms. From another point of view it was a return to the older dialectics of Socrates and Plato, who always looked on their major premises as possessing only a conditional validity—conditional, that is to say, on the consent of their interlocutor. We have further to note that both the disjunctive and the hypothetical syllogism were first recognised as such by the Stoics; a discovery connected with the feature which most profoundly distinguishes their logic from Aristotle's logic. We showed, in dealing with the latter, that it is based on an analysis of the concept, and that all its imperfections are due to that single circumstance. It was the Stoics who first brought judgment, so fatally neglected by the author of the *Analytics*, into proper prominence. Having once grasped propositions as the beginning and end of reasoning, they naturally and under the guidance of common language, passed from simple to complex assertions, and immediately detected the arguments to which these latter serve as a foundation. And if we proceed to ask why they were more interested in judgment than in conception, we shall probably find the explanation to be that their philosophy had its root in the ethical and practical interests which involve a continual process of injunction and belief, that is to say, a continual association of such disparate notions as an impression and an action; while the Aristotelian philosophy, being ultimately derived from early Greek thought, had for its leading principle the circumscription of external objects and their reproduction under the form of an abstract classification. Thus the naturalistic system, starting with the application of

scientific ideas to human life, ultimately carried back into science the vital idea of Law, that is, of fixed relations subsisting between disparate phenomena, and of knowledge as the subsumption of less general under more general relations.

Under the guidance of a somewhat similar principle the Stoic logicians attempted a reform of Aristotle's categories. These they reduced to four: Substance, Quality, Disposition, and Relation (*τὸ ὑποκείμενον, τὸ ποιὸν, τὸ πῶς ἔχον,* and *τὸ πρός τι πῶς ἔχον**); and the change was an improvement in so far as it introduced a certain method and subordination where none existed before; for each category implies, and is contained in, its predecessor; whereas the only order traceable in Aristotle's categories refers to the comparative frequency of the questions to which they correspond.

With the idea of subsumption and subordination to law, we pass at once to the Stoic ethics. For Zeno, the end of life was self-consistency; for Cleanthes, consistency with Nature; for Chrysippus, both the one and the other. The still surviving individualism of the Cynics is represented in the first of these principles; the religious inspiration of the Stoa in the second; and the comprehensiveness of its great systematizing intellect in the last. On the other hand there is a vagueness about the idea of self-consistency which seems to date from a time when Stoicism was less a new and exclusive school than an endeavour to appropriate whatever was best in the older schools. For to be consistent is the common ideal of all philosophy, and is just what distinguishes it from the uncalculating impulsiveness of ordinary life, the chance inspirations of ordinary thought. But the Peripatetic who chose knowledge as his highest good differed widely from the Hedonist who made pleasure or painlessness his end; and even if they agreed in thinking that the highest pleasure is yielded by knowledge, the Stoic himself would assert that the object of their common pursuit was with both alike essentially unmoral. He would, no doubt, maintain that the self-consistency of any theory but his own was a delusion, and that all false moralities would, if consistently acted out, inevitably land their professors in a contradiction.† Yet the absence of contradiction, although a valuable verification, is too negative a mark to serve for the sole test of rightness; and thus we are led on to the more specific standard of conformability to Nature, whether our own or that of the universe as a whole. Here again

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* Zeller, p. 93.

† "Quid est sapientia? Semper idem velle atque idem nolle. Licet illam exceptiunculam non adjicias ut rectum sit quod velis. Non potest cuiquam semper idem placere nisi rectum." Seneca: *Epist.* xx. 4.

a difficulty presents itself. The idea of Nature had taken such a powerful hold on the Greek mind that it was employed by every school in turn,—except perhaps by the extreme sceptics, still faithful to the traditions of Protagoras and Gorgias,—and was confidently appealed to in support of the most divergent ethical systems. We find it occupying a prominent place both in Plato's *Laws* and in Aristotle's *Politics;* while the maxim, Follow Nature, was borrowed by Zeno himself from Polemo the head of the Academy, or perhaps from Polemo's predecessor, Xenocrates. And Epicurus, the great opponent of Stoicism, maintained, not without plausibility, that every animal is led by nature to pursue its own pleasure in preference to any other end. Thus, when Cleanthes declared that pleasure was unnatural, he and the Epicureans could not have been talking about the same thing. They must have meant something different by pleasure or by nature or by both.

The last alternative seems the most probable. Nature with the Stoics was a fixed objective order whereby all things work together as co-operant parts of a single system. Each has a certain office to perform, and the perfect performance of it is the creature's virtue, or reason, or highest good; these three expressions being always used as strictly synonymous terms. Here we have the teleology, the dialectics, and the utilitarianism of Socrates so worked out and assimilated, that they differ only as various aspects of a single truth. The three lines of Socratic teaching had also been drawn to a single point by Plato; but his idealism had necessitated the creation of a new world for their development and concentration. The idea of Nature as it had grown up under the hands of Heracleitus, the Sophists, and Antisthenes, supplied Zeno with a ready-made mould into which his reforming aspirations could be run. The true Republic was not a pattern laid up in heaven, nor was it restricted to the narrow dimensions of a single Hellenic state. It was the whole real universe in every part of which except in the works of wicked men a divine law was recognized and obeyed. Nay, according to Cleanthes, God's law is obeyed even by the wicked, and the essence of morality consists only in its voluntary fulfilment. As others very vividly put it, we are like a dog tied under a cart, if we do not choose to run we shall be dragged along.*

It will now be better understood whence arose the hostility of the Stoics to pleasure, and how they could speak of it in what seems to us such a paradoxical style. It was subjective feeling as opposed to objective law; it was relative, particular, and

* Zeller, p. 168, note 2.

individual, as opposed to their formal standard of right; and it was continually drawing men away from their true nature by acting as a temptation to vice. Thus, probably for the last reason, Cleanthes could speak of pleasure as contrary to Nature, while less rigorous authorities regarded it as absolutely indifferent, being a consequence of natural actions, not an essential element in their performance. And when their opponents pointed to the universal desire for pleasure as a proof that it was the natural end of animated beings, the Stoics answered that what Nature had in view was not pleasure at all, but the preservation of life itself.*

Such an interpretation of instinct introduces us to a new principle—self-interest; and this was, in fact, recognized on all hands as the foundation of right conduct; it was about the question, What is our interest? that the ancient moralists were disagreed. The Cynics apparently held that, for every being, simple existence is the only good, and therefore with them virtue meant limiting oneself to the bare necessaries of life; while by following Nature they meant reducing existence to its lowest terms, and assimilating our actions so far as possible to those of the lower animals, plants, or even stones, all of which require no more than to maintain the integrity of their proper nature.

Where the Cynics left off the Stoics began. Recognizing simple self-preservation as the earliest interest and duty of man, they held that his ultimate and highest good was complete self-realization, the development of that rational, social, and beneficent nature which distinguishes him from the lower animals. Here their teleological religion came in as a valuable sanction for their ethics. Epictêtus, probably following older authorities, argues that self-love has purposely been made identical with sociability. "The nature of an animal is to do all things for its own sake. Accordingly God has so ordered the nature of the rational animal that it cannot obtain any particular good without at the same time contributing to the common good. Because it is self-seeking it is not therefore unsocial."† But if our happiness depends on external goods, then we shall begin to fight with one another for their possession;‡ friends, father, country, the gods themselves, everything will, with good reason, be sacrificed to their attainment. And, regarding this as a self-evident absurdity, Epictêtus concludes that our happiness must consist solely in a righteous will, which we know to have been the doctrine of his whole school.

We have now reached the great point on which the Stoic ethics differed from that of Plato and Aristotle. The two latter, while upholding virtue as the highest good, allowed external

* Diogenes Laertius, vii. 85. † *Dissert.* I. xix. 11. ‡ Ibid. xxii. 9, ff.

advantages like pleasure and exemption from pain to enter into their definition of perfect happiness; nor yet did they demand the entire suppression of passion, but, on the contrary, assigned to it a certain part in the formation of character. We must add, although it was not a point insisted on by the ancient critics, that they did not bring out the socially beneficent character of virtue with anything like the distinctness of their successors. The Stoics, on the other hand, refused to admit that there was any good but a virtuous will, or that any useful purpose could be served by irrational feeling. If the passions agree with virtue they are superfluous, if they are opposed to it they are mischievous; and once we give them the rein they are more likely to disagree with than to obey it. The severer school had more reason on their side than is commonly admitted. Either there is no such thing as duty at all, or duty must be paramount over every other motive—that is to say, a perfect man will discharge his obligations at the sacrifice of every personal advantage. There is no pleasure that he will not renounce, no pain that he will not endure, rather than leave them unfulfilled. But to assume this supremacy over his will, duty must be incommensurable with any other motive; if it is a good at all, it must be the only good. To identify virtue with happiness seems to us absurd, because we are accustomed to associate it exclusively with those dispositions which are the cause of happiness in others, or altruism; and happiness itself with pleasure or the absence of pain, which are states of feeling necessarily conceived as egoistic. But neither the Stoics nor any other ancient moralists recognized such a distinction; all agreed that public and private interest must somehow be identical, the only question being should one be merged in the other, and if so, which? or should there be an illogical compromise between the two. The alternative chosen by Zeno was incomparably nobler than the system of Epicurus, while it was more consistent than those of Plato and Aristotle. He regarded right conduct exclusively in the light of those universal interests with which alone it is properly concerned; and if he appealed to the motives supplied by personal happiness, this was a confusion of phraseology rather than of thought.

The treatment of the passions by the Stoic school presents greater difficulties, due partly to their own vacillation, partly to the very indefinite nature of the feelings in question. It will be admitted that here also the claims of duty are supreme. To follow the promptings of fear or of anger, of pity or of love, without considering the ulterior consequences of our action, is, of course, wrong. For even if, in any particular instance, no harm comes of the concession, we cannot be sure that such will always be the case, and meanwhile the passion is strengthened

by indulgence. And we have also to consider the bad effect produced on the character of those who, finding themselves the object of passion, learn to address themselves to it instead of to reason. Difficulties arise when we begin to consider how far education should aim at the systematic discouragement of strong emotion. Here the Stoics seem to have taken up a position not very consistent either with their appeals to Nature or with their teleological assumptions. Nothing strikes one as more unnatural than the complete absence of human feeling; and a believer in design might plausibly maintain that every emotion conduced to the preservation either of the individual or of the race. We find, however, that the Stoics, here as elsewhere reversing the Aristotelian method, would not admit the existence of a psychological distinction between reason and passion. According to their analysis, the emotions are so many different forms of judgment. Joy and sorrow are false opinions respecting good and evil in the present: desire and fear, false opinions respecting good and evil in the future. But, granting a righteous will to be the only good, and its absence the only evil, there can be no room for any of these feelings in the mind of a truly virtuous man, since his opinions on the subject of good are correct, and its possession depends entirely on himself. Everything else arises from an external necessity, to strive with which would be useless because it is inevitable, and impious because it is supremely wise.

It will be seen that the Stoics condemned passion not as the cause of immoral actions but as instrinsically vicious in itself. Hence their censure extended to the rapturous delight and passionate grief which seem entirely out of relation to conduct properly so called. This was equivalent to saying that the will has complete control over emotion; a doctrine which our philosophers did not shrink from maintaining. It might have been supposed that a position which the most extreme supporters of free-will would hardly accept, would find still less favour with an avowedly necessarian school. And to regard the emotions as either themselves beliefs, or as inevitably caused by beliefs, would seem to remove them even farther from the sphere of moral responsibility. The Stoics, however, having arrived at the perfectly true doctrine that judgment is a form of volition, seem to have immediately invested it with the old associations of free choice which they were at the same time busily engaged in stripping off from its other forms. They took up the Socratic paradox that virtue is knowledge; but they would not agree with Socrates that it could be instilled by force of argument. To them vice was not so much ignorance as the obstinate refusal to be convinced.*

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* Zeller, p. 229.

The Stoic arguments are, indeed, when we come to analyse them, appeals to authority rather than to the logical understanding. We are told again and again that the common objects of desire and dread cannot really be good or evil, because they are not altogether under our control. And if we ask why this necessarily excludes them from the class of things to be pursued or avoided, the answer is that man, having been created for perfect happiness, must also have been created with the power to secure it by his own unaided exertions. But, even granting the very doubtful thesis that there is any ascertainable purpose in creation at all, it is hard to see how the Stoics could have answered any one who chose to maintain that man is created for enjoyment; since, judging by experience, he has secured a larger share of it than of virtue, and is just as capable of gaining it by a mere exercise of volition. For the professors of the Porch fully admitted that their ideal sage had never been realized, which, with their opinions about their indivisibility of virtue, was equivalent to saying that there never had been such a thing as a good man at all. Or, putting the same paradox into other words, since the two classes of wise and foolish divide humanity between them, and since the former class has only an ideal existence, they were obliged to admit that mankind are not merely most of them fools, but all fools. And this, as Plutarch has pointed out in his very clever attack on Stoicism, is equivalent to saying that the scheme of creation is a complete failure.*

The inconsistencies of a great philosophical system are best explained by examining its historical antecedents. We have already attempted to disentangle the roots from which Stoicism was nourished, but one of them has not yet been taken into account. This was the still continued influence of Parmenides, derived, if not from his original teaching, then from some one or more of the altered shapes through which it had passed. It has been shown how Zeno used the Heracleitean method to break down all the demarcations laboriously built up by Plato and Aristotle. Spirit was identified with matter; ideas with aerial currents; God with the world; rational with sensible evidence; volition with judgment; and emotion with thought. But the idea of a fundamental antithesis, expelled from every other department of inquiry, took hold with all the more energy on what, to Stoicism, was the most vital of all distinctions—that between right and wrong. Once grasp this transformation of a metaphysical into a moral principle, and every paradox of the system will be seen to follow from it with logical necessity. What the supreme Idea had been to Plato and self-thinking

* Plutarch, *De Communibus Notitiis*, cap. xxxiii. p. 1076 B.

thought to Aristotle, that virtue became to the new school, simple, unchangeable, and self-sufficient. It must not only be independent of pleasure and pain, but absolutely incommensurable with them; therefore there can be no happiness but what it gives. As an indivisible unity, it must be possessed entirely or not at all; and, being eternal, once possessed it can never be lost. Further, since the same action may be either right or wrong, according to the motive of its performance, virtue is nothing external, but a subjective disposition, a state of the will and the affections; or, if these are to be considered as judgments, a state of the reason. Finally, since the universe is organized reason, virtue must be natural, and especially consonant to the nature of man as a rational animal; while, at the same time, its existence in absolute purity being inconsistent with experience, it must remain an unattainable ideal.

It has been shown in former studies how Greek philosophy, after straining an antithesis to the utmost, was driven by the very law of its being to close or bridge over the chasm by a series of accommodations and transitions. To this rule Stoicism was no exception; and perhaps its extraordinary vitality may have been partly due to the necessity imposed on its professors of continually reviewing their positions, with a view to softening down its most repellent features. We proceed to sketch in rapid outline the chief artifices employed for that purpose.

The doctrine, in its very earliest form, had left a large neutral ground between good and evil, comprehending almost all the common objects of desire and avoidance. These the Stoics now proceeded to divide according to a similar principle of arrangement. Whatever, without being morally good in the strictest sense, was either conducive to morality, or conformable to human nature, or both, they called preferable. Under this head came personal advantages, such as mental accomplishments, beauty, health, strength, and life itself; together with external advantages, such as wealth, honour, and high connections. The opposite to preferable things they called objectionable; and what lay between the two, such as the particular coin selected to make a payment with, absolutely indifferent.*

The thorough-going condemnation of passion was explained away to a certain extent by allowing the sage himself to feel a slight touch of the feelings which fail to shake his determination, like a scar remaining after the wound is healed; and by admitting the desirability of sundry emotions, which, though carefully distinguished from the passions, seem to have differed from them in degree rather than in kind.†

In like manner, the peremptory alternative between consum-

* Zeller, pp. 260–1. † Ibid. pp. 267–8.

mate wisdom and utter folly was softened down by admitting the possibility of a gradual progress from one to the other, itself subdivided into a number of more or less advanced grades, recalling Aristotle's idea of motion as a link between Privation and Form.*

It was not, however, in any of these concessions that the Stoics found from first to last their most efficient solution for the difficulties of practical experience, but in the countenance they extended to an act which, more than any other, might have seemed fatally inconsistent both in spirit and in letter with their whole system, whether we choose to call it a defiance of divine law, a reversal of natural instinct, a selfish abandonment of duty, or a cowardly shrinking from pain. We allude, of course, to their habitual recommendation of suicide. "If you are not satisfied with life," they said, "you have only got to rise and depart; the door is always open." Various circumstances were specified in which the sage would exercise the privilege of "taking himself off," as they euphemistically expressed it. Severe pain, mutilation, incurable disease, advanced old age, the hopelessness of escaping from tyranny, and in general any hindrance to leading a "natural" life were held to be a sufficient justification for such a step. The first founders of the school set an example afterwards frequently followed. Zeno is said to have hanged himself for no better reason than that he fell and broke his finger through the weakness of old age; and Cleanthes, having been ordered to abstain temporarily from food, resolved, as he expressed it, not to turn back after going half way to death. This side of the Stoic doctrine found particular favour in Rome, and the voluntary death of Cato was always spoken of as his chief title to fame. Many noble spirits were sustained in their defiance of the imperial despotism by the thought that there was one last liberty of which not even Cæsar could deprive them. Objections were silenced by the argument that, life not being an absolute good, its loss might fairly be preferred to some relatively greater inconvenience. But why the sage should renounce an existence where perfect happiness depends entirely on his own will neither was, nor could be, explained.

If now, abandoning all technicalities, we endeavour to estimate the significance and value of the most general ideas contributed by Stoicism to ethical speculation, we shall find that they may be most conveniently considered under the following heads. First of all, the Stoics made morality completely inward. They declared that the intention was equivalent to the deed, and that the wish was equivalent to the intention—a view which has been

* Zeller, p. 270.

made familiar to all by the teaching of the Gospel, but whose origin in Greek philosophy has been strangely ignored even by rationalistic writers.* From the inaccessibility of motives and feelings to direct external observation, it follows that each man must be, in the last resort, his own judge. Hence the notion of conscience is equally a Stoic creation. That we have a mystical intuition informing us, prior to experience, of the difference between right and wrong, was, indeed, a theory quite alien to their empirical derivation of knowledge. But that the educated wrongdoer carries in his bosom a perpetual witness and avenger of his guilt, they most distinctly asserted.† The difference between ancient and modern tragedy is alone sufficient to prove the novelty and power of this idea; for that the Eumenides do not represent even the germ of a conscience, it would now be waste of words to show. On the other hand, the fallibility of conscience and the extent to which it may be sophisticated were topics not embraced within the limits of Stoicism, and perhaps never adequately illustrated by any writer, even in modern times, except the great English novelist whose loss we still deplore.

The second Stoic idea to which we would invite attention is that, in the economy of life, every one has a certain function to fulfil, a certain part to play, which is marked out for him by circumstances beyond his control, but in the adequate performance of which his duty and dignity are peculiarly involved. It is true that this idea finds no assignable place in the teaching of the earliest Stoics, or rather in the few fragments of their teaching which alone have been preserved; but it is already touched upon by Cicero in a work avowedly adapted from Panætius, who flourished more than a century B.C.; it frequently recurs in the lectures of Epictêtus; and is enunciated with energetic concision in the solitary meditations of Marcus Aurelius.‡ The belief spoken of is, indeed, closely connected with the Stoic teleology, and only applies to the sphere of free intelligence a principle like that supposed to regulate the activity of inanimate or irrational beings. If every mineral, every plant, and every animal has its special use and office, so also must we, according to the capacity of our individual and

* "Omnia scelera, etiam ante effectum operis, quantum culpæ satis est, perfecta sunt."—Seneca, *De Const. Sap.* vii. 4.

† "Prope est a te Deus, tecum est, intus est . . . . sacer intra nos spiritus sedet bonorum malorumque nostrorum observator et custos."—Seneca, *Epp.* xli. 1.

‡ Cicero, *De Off.* I. 31; Epictêtus, *Man.* 17, ib. 30; *Diss.* I. ii. 33, xvi. 20, xxix. 39, II. v. 10, ib. 21, x. 4, xiv. 8, xxiii. 38, xxv. 22; Antoninus, *Comm.* VI. 39, 43, IX. 29; cf. Seneca, *Epp.* lxxxv. 54.

determinate existence. By accomplishing the work thus imposed on us, we fulfil the purpose of our vocation, we have done all that the highest morality demands, and may with a clear conscience leave the rest to fate. To put the same idea into somewhat different terms: we are born into certain relationships, domestic, social, and political, by which the lines of our daily duties are prescribed with little latitude for personal choice. The implications of such an ethical standard are, on the whole, conservative; it is assumed that social institutions are, taking them altogether, nearly the best possible at any moment; and that our truest wisdom is to make the most of them, instead of sighing for some other sphere where our grand aspirations or volcanic passions might find a readier outlet for their feverish activity. And if the teaching of the first Stoics did not take the direction here indicated, it was because they, with the communistic theories inherited from their Cynic predecessors, began by condemning all existing social distinctions as irrational. They wished to abolish local religion, property, the family, and the State, as a substitute for which the whole human race was to be united under a single government, without private possessions or slaves, and with a complete community of women and children. It must, however, have gradually dawned on them that such a radical subversion of the present system was hardly compatible with their belief in the providential origin of all things; and that, besides this, the virtues which they made it so much their object to recommend would be, for the most part, superfluous in a communistic society. At the same time, the old motion of Sôphrosynê as a virtue which consisted in minding one's own business, or, stated more generally, in discerning and doing whatever work one is best fitted for, would continue to influence ethical teaching, with the effect of giving more and more individuality to the definition of duty. And the Stoic idea of a perfect sage, including as it did the possession of every accomplishment and an exclusive fitness for discharging every honourable function, would seem much less chimerical if interpreted to mean that a noble character, while everywhere intrinsically the same, might be realized under as many divergenforms as there are opportunities for continuous usefulness in life.*

We can understand, then, why the philosophy which, when first promulgated, had tended to withdraw its adherents from participation in public life, should, when transplanted to Roman

* It need hardly be observed that here also the morality of natural law has attained its highest artistic development under the hand of George Eliot—sometimes even to the neglect of purely artistic effect, as in *Daniel Deronda* and the *Spanish Gypsy*.

soil, have become associated with an energetic interest in politics; why it was so eagerly embraced by those noble statesmen who fought to the death in defence of their ancient liberties; how it could become the cement of a republican opposition under the worst Cæsars; how it could be the pride and support of Rome's Prime Minister during that *quinquennium Neronis* which was the one bright episode in more than half a century of shame and terror; how, finally, it could mount the throne with Marcus Aurelius, and prove, through his example, that the world's work might be most faithfully performed by one in whose meditations mere worldly interests occupied the smallest space. Nor can we agree with Zeller in thinking that it was the nationality, and not the philosophy, of these disciples which made them such efficient statesmen.* On the contrary, it seems to us that the "Romanism" of these men was inseparable from their philosophy, and that they were all the more Roman because they were Stoics as well.

The third great idea of Stoicism was its doctrine of humanity. Men are all children of one Father, and citizens of one State; the highest moral law is, Follow Nature, and Nature has made them to be social and to love one another; the private interest of each is, or should be, identified with the universal interest; we should live for others that we may live for ourselves; even to our enemies we should show love and not anger; the unnaturalness of passion is shown by nothing more clearly than by its antisocial and destructive tendencies. Here, also, the three great Stoics of the Roman empire—Seneca, Epictêtus, and Marcus Aurelius—rather than the founders of the school, must be our authorities,† whether it be because their lessons correspond to a more developed state of thought, or simply because they have been more perfectly preserved. The former explanation is perhaps the more generally accepted. There seems, however, good reason for believing that the idea of universal love—the highest of all philosophical ideas next to that of the universe itself—dates further back than is commonly supposed. It can hardly be due

* Zeller, p. 297, followed by Mr. Capes, in his excellent little work on Stoicism.

† Seneca, *De Irâ*, I. v. 2 ff., II. xxxi. 7, *De Clem.* I. iii. 2., *De Benef.* IV. xxvi. 1, *Epp.* xcv. 51 ff.; Epictêtus, *Diss.* IV. v. 10; Antoninus VII. 13; together with the additional references given by Zeller, p. 286 ff. It is to be observed that the mutual love attributed to human beings by the Stoic philosophers stands, not for an empirical characteristic, but for an unrealized ideal of human nature. The actual feelings of men towards one another are described by Seneca in language recalling that of Schopenhauer and Leopardi. "Erras," he exclaims, "si istorum tibi qui occurrunt vultibus credis: hominum effigies habent, animos ferarum: nisi quod illarum perniciosior est primus incursus. Nunquam enim illas ad nocendum nisi necessitas injicit: aut fame aut timore coguntur ad pugnam: homini perdere hominem libet.—"*Epp.* ciii. 2.

to Seneca, who had evidently far more capacity for popularizing and applying the thoughts of others than for original speculation, and who on this subject expresses himself with a rhetorical fluency not usually characterizing the exposition of new discoveries. The same remark applies to his illustrious successors, who, while agreeing with him in tone, do not seem to have drawn on his writings for their philosophy. It is also clear that the idea in question springs from two essentially Stoic conceptions: the objective conception of a unified world, a Cosmos to which all men belong; and the subjective conception of a rational nature common to them all. These, again, are rooted in early Greek thought, and were already emerging into distinctness at the time of Socrates. Accordingly we find that Plato, having to compose a characteristic speech for the Sophist Hippias, makes him say that like-minded men are by nature kinsmen and friends to one another.* Nature, however, soon came to be viewed under a different aspect, and it was maintained, just as by some living philosophers, that her true law is the universal oppression of the weak by the strong. Then the idea of mind came in as a salutary corrective. It had supplied a basis for the ethics of Protagoras, and still more for the ethics of Socrates; it was now combined with its old rival by the Stoics, and from their union arose the conception of human nature as something allied with and illustrated by all other forms of animal life, yet capable, if fully developed, of rising infinitely above them. Nevertheless, the individual and the universal element were never quite reconciled in the Stoic ethics. The altruistic quality of justice was clearly perceived; but no attempt was made to show that all virtue is essentially social, and has come to be recognized as obligatory on the individual mainly because it conduces to the safety of the whole community. The learner was told to conquer his passions for his own sake rather than for the sake of others; and indulgence in violent anger, though more energetically denounced, was, in theory, placed on a par with immoderate delight or uncontrollable distress. So, also, vices of impurity were classed with comparatively harmless forms of sensuality, and considered in reference, not to the social degradation of their victims, but to the spiritual defilement of their perpetrators.

Yet, while the Stoics were far from anticipating the methods of modern Utilitarianism, they were, in a certain sense, strict Utilitarians—that is to say, they measured the goodness or badness of actions by their consequences; in other words, by their bearing on the supposed interest of the individual or of the com-

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* Plato, *Protagoras*, 337 D.

munity. They did not, it is true, identify interest with pleasure or the absence of pain; but although, in our time, Hedonism and Utilitarianism are, for convenience, treated as interchangeable terms, they need not necessarily be so. If any one choose to regard bodily strength, health, wealth, beauty, intellect, knowledge, or even simple existence, as the highest good and the end conduciveness to which determines the morality of actions, he is a Utilitarian; and, even if it could be shown that a maximum of happiness would be ensured by the attainment of his end, he does not on that account become a Hedonist. Now it is certain that the early Stoics at least regarded the preservation of the human race as an end which rightfully took precedence of every other consideration; and, like Charles Austin, they liked to push their principles to paradoxical or offensive extremes, apparently for no other purpose than that of affronting the common feelings of mankind,* without remembering that such feelings were likely to represent embodied experiences of utility. Thus—apart from their communistic theories—they were fond of specifying the circumstances in which incest would become legitimate; and they are said not only to have sanctioned cannibalism in cases of extreme necessity, but even to have recommended its introduction as a substitute for burial or cremation; although this, we may hope, was rather a grim illustration of what they meant by moral indifference than a serious practical suggestion.† Besides the encouragement which it gave to kind offices between friends and neighbours, the Stoic doctrine of humanity and mutual love was honourably exemplified in Seneca's emphatic condemnation of the gladiatorial games and of the horrible abuses connected with domestic slavery in Rome.‡ But we miss a clear perception that such abuses are always and everywhere the consequences of slavery; and the outspoken abolitionism of the naturalists alluded to by Aristotle does not seem to have been imitated by their successors in later ages.§ The most one can say is that the fiction of original liberty was imported into Roman juris-

* "He [Charles Austin] presented the Benthamic doctrines in the most startling form of which they were susceptible, exaggerating everything in them which tended to consequences offensive to any one's preconceived feelings."—Mill's *Autobiography*, p. 78.

† Zeller, p. 281.

‡ "Homo sacra res homini jam per lusum et jocum occiditur . . . . satisque spectaculi ex homine mors est."—Seneca, *Epp.* xcv. 33. "Servi sunt? Immo homines. Servi sunt? Immo contubernales. Servi sunt? Immo humiles amici. Servi sunt? Immo conservi."—Ibid. xlvii. 1. Compare the treatise *De Irâ, passim.*

§ Seneca once lets fall the words, "fortuna æquo jure genitos alium alii donavit."—*Consol. ad Marciam*, xx. 2; but this is the only expression of the kind that we have been able to discover in a Stoic writer of the empire.

prudence through the agency of Stoic lawyers, and helped to familiarize men's minds with the idea of universal emancipation before political and economical conditions permitted it to be made a reality.

It is probable that the philanthropic tendencies of the Stoics were, to a great extent, neutralized by the extreme individualism which formed the reverse side of their philosophical character; and also by what may be called the subjective idealism of their ethics. According to their principles no one can really do good to any one else, since what does not depend on my will is not a good to me. The altruistic virtues are valuable, not as sources of beneficent action, but as manifestations of benevolent sentiment. Thus, to set on foot comprehensive schemes for the relief of human suffering seemed no part of the Stoic's business. And the abolition of slavery, even had it been practicable, would have seemed rather superfluous to one who held that true freedom is a mental condition within the reach of all who desire it,* while the richest and most powerful may be, and for the most part actually are, without it. Moreover, at the time when philosophy gained its greatest ascendency, the one paramount object of practical statesmen must have been to save civilization from the barbarians, a work to which Marcus Aurelius devoted his life. Hence we learn without surprise that the legislative efforts of the imperial Stoic were directed to the strengthening, rather than to the renovation, of ancient institutions. Certain enactments were, indeed, framed for the protection of those who took part in the public games. It was provided, with a humanity from which even our own age might learn something, that performers on the high rope should be ensured against the consequences of an accidental fall by having the ground beneath them covered with feather beds; and the gladiators were only allowed to fight with blunted weapons. It must, however, be noted that in speaking of the combats with wild beasts which were still allowed to continue under his reign, Marcus Aurelius dwells only on the monotonous character which made them exceedingly wearisome to a cultivated mind; just as a philosophic sportsman may sometimes be heard to observe that shooting one grouse is very like shooting another; while elsewhere he refers with simple contempt to the poor wretches, who, when already half-devoured by the wild beasts, begged to be spared for another day's amusement.* Whether he knew the whole extent of the judicial atrocities practised on his Christian subjects may well be doubted; but it may be equally doubted

* Seneca, *Epp.* lxxx.
† Antoninus, *Comm.* vi. 46; x. 8.

whether, had he known it, he would have interfered to save them. Pain and death were no evils; but it was an evil that the law should be defied.

Those manifestations of sympathy which are often so much more precious than material assistance were also repugnant to Stoic principles. On this subject, Epictêtus expresses himself with singular harshness. "Do not," he says, "let yourself be put out by the sufferings of your friends. If they are unhappy, it is their own fault. God made them for happiness; not for misery. They are grieved at parting from you, are they? Why, then, did they set their affections on things outside themselves? If they suffer for their folly it serves them right."*

On the other hand, if Stoicism did not make men pitiful, it made them infinitely forgiving. Various causes conspired to bring about this result. If all are sinners, and if all sins are equal, no one has a right, under pretence of superior virtue, to cast a stone at his fellows. Such is the point of view insisted on with especial emphasis by Seneca, who, more perhaps than other philosophers, had reason to be conscious how far his practice fell short of his professions.† But, speaking generally, pride was the very last fault with which the Stoics could be charged. Both in ancient and modern times satirists have been prone to assume that every disciple of the Porch, in describing his ideal of a wise man, was actually describing himself. No misconception could be more complete. It is like supposing that, because Christ commanded his followers to be perfect even as their heavenly Father is perfect, every Christian for that reason thinks himself equal to God. The wise man of the Stoics had, by their own acknowledgment, never been realized at all; he had only been approached by three characters, Socrates, Antisthenes, and Diogenes. "May the sage fall in love?" asked a young man of Panætius. "What the sage may do," replied the master, "is a question to be considered at some future time. Meanwhile, you and I, who are very far from being sages, had better be careful how we let ourselves become the slaves of a degrading passion."‡

In the next place, if it is not in the power of others to injure us, we have no right to resent anything that they can do to us. So argues Epictêtus, who began to learn philosophy when still a slave, and was carefully prepared by his instructor, Musonius,

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* Epictêtus, *Diss.* III. xxiv.

† Seneca, *De Irâ*, I. xiv. 2; *De Clement.* I. vi. 2.

‡ Seneca, *Epp.* cxvi. 4. It must be borne in mind that Panætius was speaking at a time when the object of passion would at best be either another man's wife or a member of the *demi-monde*.

to bear without repining whatever outrages his master might choose to inflict on him. Finally, to those who urged that they might justly blame the evil intentions of their assailants, Marcus Aurelius could reply that even this was too presumptuous, that all men did what they thought right, and that the motives of none could be adequately judged except by himself. And all the Stoics found a common ground for patience in their optimistic fatalism, in the doctrine that whatever happens is both necessarily determined, and determined by absolute goodness combined with infallible wisdom.

Doctrines like these, if consistently carried out, would have utterly destroyed so much of morality as depends on the social sanction; while, by inculcating the absolute indifference of external actions, they might ultimately have paralysed the individual conscience itself. But the Stoics were not consistent. Unlike some modern moralists, who are ready to forgive every injury so long as they are not themselves the victims, our philosophers were unsparing in their denunciations of wrong-doing; and it is very largely to their indignant protests that we are indebted for our knowledge of the corruption prevalent in Roman society under the Empire. It may even be contended that, in this respect, our judgment has been unfairly biassed. The picture drawn by the Stoics, or by writers trained under their influence, seems to have been too heavily charged with shadow; and but for the archæological evidence we should not have known how much genuine human affection lay concealed in those lower social strata where Christianity found a readier acceptance because it only gave a supernatural sanction to habits and sentiments already made familiar by the spontaneous tendencies of an unwarlike *régime*.

Before parting with Stoicism we have to say a few words on the metaphysical foundation of the whole system—the theory of Nature considered as a moral guide and support. It has been shown that the ultimate object of this, as of many other ethical theories, both ancient and modern, was to reconcile the instincts of individual self-preservation with virtue, which is the instinct of self-preservation in an entire community. The Stoics identified both impulses by declaring that virtue is the sole good of the individual no less than the supreme interest of the whole; thus involving themselves in an insoluble contradiction. For, from their nominalistic point of view, the good of the whole can be nothing but an aggregate of particular goods, or else a means for their attainment; and in either case the happiness of the individual has to be accounted for apart from his duty. And an analysis of the special virtues and vices would equally have forced them back on the assumption, which they persistently

repudiated, that individual existence and pleasure are intrinsically good, and their opposites intrinsically evil. To prove their fundamental paradox—the non-existence of individual as distinguished from social interest—the Stoics employed the analogy of an organized body where the good of the parts unquestionably subserves the good of the whole; and the object of their teleology was to show that the universe and, by implication, the human race, were properly to be viewed in that light. The acknowledged adaptation of life to its environment furnished some plausible arguments in support of their thesis; and the deficiencies were made good by a revival of the Heracleitean theory in which the unity of nature was conceived partly as a necessary interdependence of opposing forces, partly as a perpetual transformation of every substance into every other. Universal history also tended to confirm the same principle in its application to the human race. The Macedonian, and still more the Roman empire brought the idea of a world-wide community living under the same laws ever nearer to its realization; the decay of the old religion and the old civic patriotism set free a vast fund of energy, some of which was absorbed by philosophy; while a rank growth of immorality offered ever new opportunities for an indignant protest against senseless luxury and inhuman vice. This last circumstance, however, was not allowed to prejudice the optimism of the system; for the fertile physics of Heracleitus suggested a method by which moral evil could be interpreted as a necessary concomitant of good, a material for the perpetual exercise and illustration of virtuous deeds.

Yet, if the conception of unity was gaining ground, the conceptions of purpose and vitality must have been growing weaker as the triumph of brute force prolonged itself without limit or hope of redress. Hence Stoicism in its later forms shows a tendency to dissociate the dynamism of Heracleitus from the teleology of Socrates, and to lean on the former rather than on the latter for support. One symptom of this changed attitude is a blind worship of power for its own sake. We find the renunciation of pleasure and the defiance of pain appreciated more from an æsthetic than from an ethical point of view; they are exalted almost in the spirit of a Red Indian, not as means to higher ends, but as manifestations of unconquerable strength; and sometimes the highest sanction of duty takes the form of a morbid craving for applause, as if the universe was a Coliseum and life a gladiatorial game.

The noble spirit of Marcus Aurelius was, indeed, proof against such temptations; and he had far more to dread than to hope from the unlightened voice of public opinion; but to him also,

"standing between two eternities," Nature presented herself chiefly under the aspect of an overwhelming and absorbing force Pleasure is not so much dangerous as worthless, weak, and evanescent. Selfishness, pride, anger, and discontent will soon be swept into abysmal gulfs of oblivion by the roaring cataract of change. Universal history is one long monotonous procession of phantasms passing over the scene into death and utter night. In one short life we may see all that ever was, or is, or is to be; the same pageant has already been and shall be repeated an infinite number of times. Nothing endures but the process of unending renovation: we must die that the world may be ever young. Death itself only reunites us with the absolute All whence we come, in which we move, and whither we return. But the imperial sage makes no attempt to explain why we should ever have separated ourselves from it in thought; or why one life should be better worth living than another in the universal vanity of things.

The physics of Stoicism were, in truth, the scaffolding, rather than the foundation, of its ethical superstructure. The real foundation was the necessity of social existence formulated under the influence of a logical exclusiveness first introduced by Parmenides, and inherited from his teaching by every system of philosophy in turn. Yet there is no doubt that Stoic morality was considerably strengthened and steadied by the support it found in conceptions derived from a different order of speculations; so much so that at last it grew to conscious independence of that support.

Marcus Aurelius, a constant student of Lucretius, seems to have had occasional misgivings with respect to the certainty of his own creed; but they never extended to his practical beliefs. He was determined that, whatever might be the origin of this world, his relation to it should be still the same. "Though things be purposeless, act not thou without a purpose." "If the universe is an ungoverned chaos, be content that in that wild torrent thou hast a governing reason within thyself."*

There seems, then, good reason for believing that the law of

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* *Comm.* IX. 28, xii. 14. A modern disciple of Aurelius has expressed himself to the same purpose in slightly different language:—

"Long fed on boundless hopes, O race of man,
How angrily thou spurn'st all simpler fare!
'Christ,' some one says, 'was human as we are.
No judge eyes us from heaven our sin to scan;
We live no more, when we have done our span.'
'Well, then, for Christ,' thou answerest, 'who can care?
From sin, which Heaven records not, why forbear?
Live we, like brutes, our life without a plan!'

duty, after being divorced from mythology, and seriously compromised by its association, even among the Stoics themselves, with our egoistic instincts, gained an entirely new authority when placed, at least in appearance, under the sanction of a power whose commands did not even admit of being disobeyed. And the question spontaneously presents itself whether we, after getting rid of the old errors and confusions, may profitably employ the same method in defence of the same convictions, whether the ancient alliance between fact and right can be reorganized on a basis of scientific proof.

A great reformer of the last generation, finding that the idea of Nature was constantly put forward to thwart his most cherished schemes, prepared a mine for its destruction which was only exploded after his death. Seldom has so powerful a charge of logical dynamite been collected within so small a space as in Mill's famous Essay on Nature. But the immediate effect was less than might have been anticipated, because the attack was supposed to be directed against religion, whereas it was only aimed at an abstract metaphysical dogma, not necessarily connected with any theological beliefs, and held by many who have discarded all such beliefs. A stronger impression was perhaps produced by the nearly simultaneous declaration of Sir W. Gull —in reference to the supposed *vis medicatrix naturæ*—that, in cases of disease, "what Nature wants is to put the man in his coffin." The new school of political economists have also done much to show that legislative interference with the "natural laws" of wealth need by no means be so generally mischievous as was once supposed. And the doctrine of Evolution, besides breaking down the old distinctions between Nature and Man, has represented the former as essentially variable, and therefore, to that extent, incapable of affording a fixed standard for moral action. It is, however, from this school that a new attempt to rehabilitate the old physical ethics has lately proceeded. The object of Mr. Herbert Spencer's *Data of Ethics* is, among other points, to prove that a true morality represents the ultimate stage of evolution, and reproduces in social life that permanent equilibration towards which every form of evolution constantly tends. And Mr. Spencer also shows how evolution is bringing about a state of things in which the self-regarding shall be finally

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So answerest thou; but why not rather say:
'Hath man no second life?—*Pitch this one high!*
Sits there no judge in Heaven, our sin to see?
More strictly, then, the inward judge obey!
Was Christ a man like us?—*Ah! let us try*
If we then, too, can be such men as he!'"

The Better Part, by Mr. Matthew Arnold. The italics are in the original.

harmonized with the social impulses. Now, it will be readily admitted that morality is a product of evolution in this sense that it is a gradual formation, that it is the product of many converging conditions, and that it progresses according to a certain method. But that the same method is observed through all orders of evolution seems less evident. For instance, in the formation, first of the solar system, and then of the earth's crust, there is a continual loss of force, while in the development of organic life there is as continual a gain ; and on arriving at subjective phenomena we are met by facts which, in the present state of our knowledge, cannot advantageously be expressed in terms of force and matter at all. Even if we do not agree with George Sand in thinking that self-sacrifice is the only virtue, we must admit that the possibility, at least, of its being sometimes demanded is inseparable from the idea of duty; and without consciousness self-sacrifice cannot be conceived ; which is equivalent to saying that it involves other than mechanical notions. Thus we are confronted by the standing difficulty of all evolutionary theories, and on a point where that difficulty is peculiarly sensible. Nor is this an objection to be got rid of by the argument that it applies to all philosophical systems alike. To an idealist, the dependence of morality on consciousness is a practical confirmation of his professed principles. Holding that the universal forms of experience are the conditions under which an object is apprehended, rather than modifications imposed by an unknowable object on an unknowable subject, and that these forms are common to all intelligent beings, he holds also that the perception of duty is the widening of our individual selves into that universal self which is the subjective side of all experience.

Again, whatever harmony evolution may introduce into our conceptions, whatever hopes it may encourage with regard to the future of our race, one does not see precisely what sanction it gives to morality at present—that is to say, how it makes self-sacrifice easier than before. Because certain forces have been unconsciously working towards a certain end through ages past, why should I consciously work towards the same end? If the perfection of humanity is predetermined, my conduct cannot prevent its consummation ; if it in any way depends on me, the question returns, why should my particular interests be sacrificed to it? The man who does not already love his contemporaries whom he has seen is unlikely to love them the more for the sake of a remote posterity whom he will never see at all. Finally, it must be remembered that evolution is only half the cosmic process ; it is accompanied at every stage by partial dissolution, to which in the long run it must entirely give way; and if, as Mr.

Spencer observes, evolution is the more interesting of the two,* this preference is itself due to the lifeward tendency of our thoughts; in other words, to those moral sentiments which it is sought to base on what, abstractedly considered, has all along been a creation of their own.

The idea of Nature, or of the universe, or of human history, as a whole—but for its evil associations with fanaticism and superstition, we should gladly say the belief in God—is one the ethical value of which can be more easily felt than analysed. We do not agree with the most brilliant of the English Positivists in restricting its influence to the æsthetic emotions. The elevating influence of these should be duly recognized, but the place due to more severely intellectual pursuits in moral training is greater far. Whatever studies tend to withdraw us from the petty circle of our personal interests and pleasures are indirectly favourable to the preponderance of social over selfish impulses; and the service thus rendered is amply repaid, since these very studies necessitate for their continuance a large expenditure of moral energy. It might even be contended that the influence of speculation on practice is determined by the previous influence of practice on speculation. Physical laws act as an armature to the law of duty, extending and perpetuating its grasp on the minds of men; but it was through the magnetism of duty that their confused currents were first drawn into parallelism and harmony with its attraction. Yet those who base morality on religion, or give faith precedence over works, have discerned with a sure, though dim, instinct the dependence of noble and far-sighted action on some paramount intellectual initiative and control; in other words, the highest ethical ideals are conditioned by the highest philosophical generalizations. And what was once a creative, still continues to work as an educating force. Our aspirations towards agreement with ourselves and with humanity as a whole are strengthened by the contemplation of that supreme unity, which, even if it be but the glorified reflection of our individual or generic identity, still remains the idea in and through which those lesser unities were first completely realized—the idea which has originated all man's most fruitful faiths, and will at last absorb them all. Meanwhile our highest devotion can hardly find more fitting utterance than in the prayer which once rose to a Stoic's lips:—

> "But Jove all-bounteous! who in clouds
> enwrapt the lightning wieldest;
> May'st Thou from baneful Ignorance
> the race of men deliver!

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* *First Principles*, § 177.